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Hafa Adai!

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MCC backs off bid to quash OSHA warrant

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

MCC International Saipan Ltd. Co., which is contracted to build the Imperial Pacific Resort in Garapan, withdrew yesterday its emergency motion to quash a federal court warrant that would allow the Occupational Safety and Health Administration to inspect the site.

See MCC on Page 4

THE JOY OF READING — CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

First Lady Diann Torres reads the book titled *Polar Express* to students of Riya Nathrani's third grade class at William S. Reyes Elementary School. Torres also did a read-aloud session with one of Garapan Elementary School's third grade class.

Senator: Dynasty's $75M fine keeps investors away

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

Senate President Francisco M. Borja (Ind-Tinian) blames the $75-million fine slapped by a federal agency on the Tinian Dynasty Hotel & Casino for driving away potential investors.

Borja said the $75-million fine imposed by U.S. Department of the Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, commonly known as FinCEN, keeps investors away from taking over Tinian Dynasty.

Last year, FinCEN found out that

See SENATOR on Page 4

Kilili: Tensions with China to continue

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

Sablan

Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP) believes tensions between the United States and China would continue but it would not lead into a full-scale war between the two world powers. China has beefed up its presence in the disputed region of the South China Sea with the People's Liberation Army, the country's armed forces, installing weapons on some of the artificial islands.

U.S. airplanes and ships—either commercial or military—would continue to fly in the air space and use the sea route based on inter-

See KILILI on Page 4

M/V *Luta* custodian says Yamamoto liable for $82,463

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

The custodian of M/V *Luta* that asked the federal court to require Japanese investor Takahisa Yamamoto to pay it $82,463.33 for custodian services from October to December 2016, asked the court yesterday to hold Yamamoto liable to pay the entire amount.

National Maritime Services Inc., through Sean E. Frink, however, stated that Yamamoto can ask other parties to contribute for the costs of custodian services.

The court approved NMS' hiring

See YAMAMOTO on Page 4

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LOCAL
Star Wars fans rejoiced at the release of *Rogue One: A Star Wars Movie* on island.

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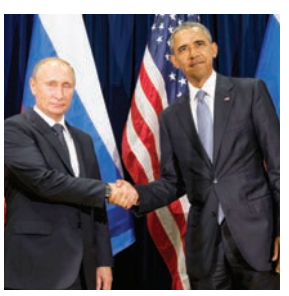

NATION
Donald Trump isn't ready to accept the finding that Moscow hacked emails to elevate him.

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ASIA
China says its military seized a U.S. Navy unmanned underwater glider in the South China Sea.

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Local

11 govt agencies, programs get additional funds

Northern Marianas College president Dr. Carmen Fernandez, center, and NMC employees pose for a group photo with Gov. Ralph DLG Torres and Lt. Gov. Victor Hocog after the governor signed a measure that appropriates $1 million to the college.

NMC

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

Eleven departments and programs of the CNMI government would get additional funding after the Senate passed House Bill 19-212 last week, earmarking supplemental appropriations from the business gross revenue tax collected from the lone casino license holder. Rep. Antonio P. Sablan (Ind-Saipan) introduced HB 19-212.

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres signed HB 19-212 today at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe, along with HB 19-158 that compensates private landowners and court judgments, and HB 19-209 that gives civil service employees a 5-percent salary adjustment.

Torres, in a letter to Senate President Francisco M. Borja (Ind-Tinian) and House Speaker Rafael S. Demapan (R-Saipan), said that Best Sunshine LIVE's business gross revenue tax has pumped in new money that could be used for various programs.

"It has been a little over a year since our gaming industry's live training facility began its operation, but since then our Commonwealth has seen a significant influx of new revenue that underscores not just our economic resurgence, but also the viability of our tourism industry," said Torres. "This bill will help to improve the standard of living for our people and strengthen our government's ability to provide quality public service to our islands."

HB 19-212 identified a projected amount of $40,967,307.88 out of the $47 million BGRT that has already been collected in fiscal year 2017. HB 19-212 sets aside $10,241,826 for the Public School System; almost half of the money will be used to buy instructional materials for language, arts, math, science, and social studies.

The other recipients of the money are land compensation payments ($9 million); Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. ($7 million); the central government's payment to the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. ($3,624,116); retirees and beneficiaries' bonus ($3.5 million); Fuel Adjustment Clause rate subsidy and Medical Referral Program ($2 million each); outstanding lump sum wages of all active and inactive employees frozen at Step 12 ($1,451,365); Governor's Office Substance Abuse and Rehabilitation, and Community Guidance Center programs ($1 million), Northern Marianas College ($1 million), and Northern Marianas Trades Institute ($150,000).

Torres said he knows there are a lot more things to do as the CNMI economy continues to improve. "It is my hope we continue this work of progress together as we press forward in the coming year to create a more efficient government that acts as an agent of change. …And as a government that reaches its goal of [improving] the lives of the people who call these islands home."

Holley named special prosecutor in traffic case against Zarones

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Matthew Holley was appointed Friday as special prosecutor to handle the traffic case against Office of the Attorney General Chief Solicitor James M. Zarones.

Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho ordered the OAG to pay Holley at his regular hourly rate.

On Friday, Superior Court's clerk of court Patrick V. Diaz had requested to be recused as his family member is a potential witness.

The day before, Camacho disqualified the OAG from prosecuting Zarones, saying the OAG cannot prosecute its own.

Camacho ordered the clerk of court to go through the list of NMI Bar members and see if anyone is willing to be a special prosecutor in the case.

Assistant attorney general Jonathan Robert Glass Jr. has asserted that the OAG's Criminal Division has not committed any ethical violations, nor has it violated the rules of professional conduct in prosecuting the traffic case against Zarones.

Glass said the government has sought a lawful motion to reconsider Superior Court Presiding Judge Robert C. Naraja's order pursuant to the rules as well as CNMI Supreme Court precedent.

Naraja's minute order directed the OAG to appoint a special prosecutor to handle Zarones' traffic case. The OAG then moved for reconsideration of Naraja's order.

Zarones' last day as an employee of the OAG Civil Division will be on Dec. 26, 2016.

Zarones is accused of failing to yield the right of way to another motorist. The traffic citation was issued by a police officer on Oct. 5, 2016.

The bench trial will be on Dec. 21, 2016 at 2:30pm.

Miura talks of teacher retention and equity

By ERWIN ENCINARES
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REPORTER

Dora Miura, the 2016 Teacher of the Year, presented to the Board of Education possible solutions to the Public School System's problem of retaining and recruiting teachers for the CNMI.

Miura, wife of teacher representative Paul Miura and a mathematics teacher at Saipan Southern High School, shared with the board her take on teacher retention and system-wide equity for school in the CNMI.

"I think it is important that they continue on to supporting this program [Teacher of the Year program]. I talked about what I have learned throughout 2016 as Teacher of the Year, and I focused on two items—teacher leadership and equity," said Miura.

"Leadership—it's really about teacher retention and recruitment. I know that is a really big issue here. I know that just from me being from SSHS and seeing that we have open positions that just can't be filled, so it's difficult to recruit and retain teachers," she said.

Miura wants PSS to be open to advancement in the teaching profession that doesn't mean going in the direction of school administration.

"There are five components to retention and recruitment: alternate certification, evaluation feedback, mentorship and induction, financial incentives, and teacher leadership. I focused on teacher leadership, which is giving teachers the opportunity for career advancement that is not administration," she said.

Miura refers to teacher leadership as a sort of hybrid role—"being in the classroom part of the time but also helping other teacher the other part of the time."

In Miura's understanding of equity and equality, "equity means looking at where everybody is and giving them the necessary treatment to grow. It's a growth mindset more than everybody is the same."

"We are all different in terms of education or any other aspect," she added.

Miura said it is equity that is needed in schools rather than equality to better suit the needs of students, "instead of applying a one-size-fits-all treatment, giving the schools the autonomy to tweak systems to suit their needs for the communities, parents, and students. I am asking the board to consider policy that has that kind of language of equity versus equality."

The 2017 CNMI Teacher of the Year is Gerard Van Gils.

BOE chair Herman Guerrero thought the idea was interesting.

"It's interesting. That is an excellent idea that perhaps we can [develop further] with the commissioner," said Guerrero.

BOE board member Tanya King said that one of the problems of PSS was the lack of teachers specializing in certain subjects.

"We have teachers who are not teaching in their content area. We need to provide mentors that are highly qualified teachers within our system and if we do not have them on Rota and Tinian since we do not have the resources, we can let those teachers that have expertise in that area, just as Ms. Miura spoke about, to communicate with them via the internet and provide them with the support that they need," she said.

Humanities grant deadline extended

The Northern Marianas Humanities Council wishes to advise the public that the submission schedule for first quarter community grant applications, originally set for Dec. 30, 2016, has been rescheduled.

The new submission deadline is 4pm on Tuesday, Jan. 3, 2017.

All grant applications must be submitted by this deadline in order to be considered by the council's board of directors during its first quarterly board meeting tentatively scheduled for Jan. 31, 2017.

Grant applications and instructions may be downloaded from the council's website, www.northernmarianashumanities.org, or picked up at the council's office at Springs Plaza, Gualo Rai.

Contact council staff at 235-4785 for additional information about its community grant program. ***(PR)***

High surf and small craft advisory

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Tiyan, Guam, and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point, fresh to strong trade winds and combined seas of 10 to 12 feet will produce hazardous conditions for operators of small craft this week.

A high surf advisory remains in effect until 6pm Thursday.

For east facing reefs, surf will be hazardous at 10 to 13 feet through Wednesday. The surf will remain hazardous through Thursday.

For north facing reefs, surf will be hazardous at 8 to 10 feet through Wednesday. The surf will remain hazardous through Thursday.

A small craft advisory remains in effect until 6pm Thursday. A small craft advisory remains in effect through Thursday.

Fresh to strong trade winds and combined seas of 10 to 12 feet will produce hazardous conditions for operators of small craft the next few days.

The EOC is advising the public and inexperienced mariners, especially those operating smaller vessels, to avoid sailing in these conditions. Avoid venturing near reefs along exposed beaches, especially those facing north and east. Rip currents will be life-threatening. ***(EOC)***

3 arrested for allegedly beating man over $500 loan

Three men allegedly brought a man to Marpi, beat him up there, and threatened to throw him off a cliff last Thursday night for allegedly failing to pay $500 in loan plus $1,500 in interest.

Ruijian Huang, 36; Chao Xi Huang, 29; and Wen Wang, 34, were arrested for alleged kidnapping, assault and battery, assault, and disturbing the peace.

Two police officers who responded to a barracks in Tanapag saw the victim sitting, crying, and trembling.

A $25,000 cash bail was initially imposed on each of the suspects. A bail hearing was set yesterday afternoon before Superior Court Associate Judge Teresa Kim-Tenorio.

Police said a man called the Department of Public Safety on Thursday at 8:15pm and reported that an employee of MCC International Saipan Ltd. Co. had been beaten up and was at the former Top Fashion garment factory in Tanapag.

The victim told the two responding police officers that he borrowed $500 from a man he only knows as Mr. Huang, who has been selling alcoholic beverages from the back of his car to MCC employees in front of their barracks.

The victim told police that Huang, later identified as Ruijian Huang, later returned with two other MCC employees, Chao Huang and Wang. The three allegedly grabbed the victim and forced him inside a white car, with license plate ACU 105.

The suspects then drove him to a mountainous area in Marpi. The victim said one of the suspects slapped and punched him in the face. Ruijian Huang allegedly threatened that he knows people who can kill the victim.

One of the suspects threatened to throw the victim off the mountain. When the suspects dropped him back at the barracks, the victim immediately went to the security office, whom he asked to call police.

At 9:42pm that same day, police units found the car in the parking lot of the Carolinian Utt in Garapan.

A police officer escorted the victim to the Carolinian Utt parking area, where he identified the three suspects. The suspects were then arrested.

Police detective Vincent A. Igisaiar disclosed that during his follow-up interview that night, the victim revealed that he had been gambling and lost money last Nov. 5. The victim borrowed from Ruijian Huang $200 and later another $300.

Later that month, Ruijian Huang approached him and demanded payment for the $500 he borrowed. When he told him he did not have money, Ruijian Huang told him he will be charging him $25 in interest per day.

The victim said he was so scared and agreed to pay back the $500 plus $1,500 interest.

The suspects then dropped him back off by the road of his barracks. Ruijian Huang threatened him again.

The victim instead asked the security guard at their barracks to call the police. ***(Ferdie de la Torre)***

Four are arrested for alleged ice trafficking and possession

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

CNMI Drug Enforcement Task Force arrested last week three men and a woman for alleged trafficking and possession of methamphetamine or "ice" on Saipan.

Hong Xia Shao Ayuyu, 45, and Fei Long Zheng, 25, were both arrested for trafficking of a controlled substance and possession of a controlled substance.

Jia Wei Feng, 27, was arrested for possession of a controlled substance, while Jian Feng, 36, was arrested for conspiracy to trafficking of a controlled substance.

All four are Chinese nationals. Except for Ayuyu, all are males.

At a hearing on Thursday, Superior Court Associate Judge Joseph N. Camacho imposed $100,000 cash bail on each defendant; preliminary hearing will be on Dec. 22 at 10am.

Assistant public defender Michael Sato was appointed as counsel for all defendants. Assistant attorney general Chester Hinds appeared for the government.

Task force officers said the "ice" seized and involved in the deals tested positive presumptive for methamphetamine.

In Ayuyu's case, task force officer Rudolph C. Sablan Jr. said they received information that the defendant, also known as Mama, sells "ice" from her business establishment known as C.K. Dress Shop in Chalan Kanoa.

Sablan said that on Nov. 1, 2016, a cooperating defendant managed to buy "ice" worth $180 from Ayuyu in the back of the dress shop.

During the second operation last Nov. 10, the cooperating defendant purchased $660 worth of "ice" from Ayuyu.

Task force operatives arrested Ayuyu last Nov. 12, but she agreed to serve as a cooperating defendant in exchange for her release. The Superior Court granted Ayuyu's release and sealed the matter.

In the government's request last week, Hinds moved for the re-arrest of Ayuyu for allegedly not cooperating with law enforcers. Ayuyu was then re-arrested on Wednesday afternoon in Chalan Kanoa.

Zheng case was arrested in Garapan on Wednesday.

Task force officer Roque K. Camacho disclosed in his report that their cooperating defendant was able to buy $690 worth of "ice" from the defendant outside a house in Garapan last Dec. 10.

Camacho said Zheng served as delivery man from another "ice" source. Task force officers arrested Zheng in Garapan last Wednesday.

In Jia Wei Feng's case, Hinds said task force agents arrested the defendant for illegal possession of a controlled substance last Sept. 13, but he agreed to serve as a confidential informant. Jia Feng was released without a cash bail, subject to certain conditions.

Hinds said Jia Feng, however, has not cooperated with law enforcers in ongoing investigations.

Hinds on Tuesday requested the court to unseal the case and revoke Jia Feng's release. The court granted the motion.

In Jian Feng's case, when officers arrested Jian Feng's "ice" source last Oct. 28, they allegedly seized from him 10 grams of methamphetamine.

Task force officers arrested Jian Feng in Garapan on Wednesday night.

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YAMAMOTO

From Page 1

as custodian of M/V *Luta* last Oct. 25.

Frink said Yamamoto's himself specified that NMS be appointed and clearly set forth the proposed terms of that appointment.

Frink said it is, therefore, the NMS/Yamamoto commercial vessel custody agreement that is the basis for determining how much, when, and by whom NMS' vessel custodian services are to be paid for.

The lawyer said NMS and Yamamoto are the only parties to the custody agreement.

Second, he pointed out, that agreement also made clear that Yamamoto "shall make future payments immediately upon presentation of written estimates for services contracted or invoices for services provided."

Frink said Yamamoto's response to the NMS motion concedes every underlying factual and legal basis provided by NMS.

Yet, Frink said, Yamamoto concludes his response by inviting the court to ignore his clear responsibility to pay NMS.

The lawyer said once Yamamoto has paid NMS, he will be free to file his contribution motion.

Yamamoto is suing Lt. Gov. Victor Hocog and the owners/operators of M/V *Luta* for allegedly refusing to pay back the $3.4 million that he put up for the vessel.

He asked the court last week not to require him to pay custodian services for the ship. Yamamoto, through counsel George Lloyd Hasselback, asserted that all intervenors should also share payment of the custodian fees.

After Yamamoto filed the lawsuit last Oct. 25, the U.S. Marshal Service seized M/V *Luta*. NMS was subsequently appointed as custodian.

Two companies and crewmembers of M/V *Luta* also joined as intervenors in the lawsuit.

Norton Lilly wants to collect from M/V *Luta* $131,801.10 in alleged unpaid goods and services.

The captain and six other crewmembers of M/V *Luta* have also intervened because they allegedly have not been paid of their wages, $183,647.77.

Long Consulting LLC, a limited liability company, has also claimed to have a maritime lien in M/V *Luta* after the vessel's owners/operators allegedly failed to repay any part of their $300,000 loan or any interest.

Hasselback said they oppose the form of the order sought by NMS to the extent that it would place the entire burden of immediate payment of accrued and forthcoming custodial fees solely upon Yamamoto.

Hasselback said the various intervenors bear a degree of responsibility for the payment of custodial fees proportional to their claims upon the vessel.

Yamamoto last week asked the court to order the sale of M/V *Luta* to avoid its deterioration and excessive cost of keeping the vessel while his lawsuit is pending in court.

KILILI

From Page 1

national laws.

China also protested last week's move by President-elect Donald Trump when he talked on the phone with Taiwan President Tsai Ing-Wen, breaking a 40-year diplomatic policy recognizing the former.

"There's going to be tensions. There's always growing tension in the South China Sea and in some of those islands, but I don't see China and the U.S. going to war. But, you know an accident could always occur," said Sablan.

"The U.S. would continue to travel the seas based on international laws. They had passed and traveled by the Spratly Islands, there are some U.S. ships that travel or pass by, [while] airplanes fly over the islands. There's no cause of alarm. I don't see China wanting to go to war with the U.S.," he added.

Although China continues to invest in its military and other infrastructures, the country is still far from the technology the U.S. armed forces has "They are having problems with their economy. Their national debt is more than the U.S. and it is becoming a problem for them."

"Politicians do this, those who run countries. They exert power outside [if] they have a problem in their country. That is just President Xi's [Jinping] way of showing Chinese citizens that they are a super power. They continue to invest in their military and infrastructure, but they are still far away from the U.S. capabilities in weapons technology."

The United Nations Arbitral Tribunal had already sided with the Philippines, coming out with a decision this year that it owns the exclusive sovereign rights over the region and ruled that China's "nine-dash line" is invalid. China has not honored that decision.

The U.S. military has the Naval Base Guam and the Andersen Air Force Base in the Marianas' southernmost island chain. The U.S. Air Force, last week had also signed a record of decision to use Tinian for the divert airfield and other military exercises.

"The divert airfield is just in case if there's a typhoon in Guam, they would need to relocate their planes from Andersen to Tinian. Then they would use Tinian facilities. Then they would also have annual trainings, these are the reasons behind the divert," Sablan said.

WINNING TREE
Green Meadow School's winning Christmas tree was ornamented with recycled hand-made ornaments.
ERWIN ENCINARES

SENATOR

From Page 1

Dynasty owner Hong Kong Entertainment (Overseas) Investors failed to implement an anti-money laundering program that would have kept the company in compliance with the U.S. Bank Secrecy Act.

Tinian Dynasty remains closed after ceasing operations early this year.

Borja added the Dynasty has also become a liability for Tinian.

"The Dynasty remains closed but there's a developer that wishes to take over the operations but FinCEN is the problem. I don't think a developer would want to come in and pay $75 million [in fines]," said Borja.

He said any investor would shy away from the deal, thinking why would they pay the huge fine that was not their doing. "That's what holding them back. It is somebody else's problem."

Borja said the investor even negotiated with FinCEN to lower the fine but the federal agency is not budging an inch. "They [FinCEN] maintain their position that if [you] want to take over and invest [you] should pay the $75 million fine."

"The liability attached to Dynasty is the main concern and problem. [Another of] our concern, with the Dynasty remaining closed is the facilities are becoming dilapidated. It would be costly renovating or improving it," he added.

Borja said the Tinian leadership and the Tinian Casino Gaming Control Commission are trying to find other ways to make the facility useful again or have new investors—either an individual or a group—come in and take over the operations.

"It would be a lot sooner to have somebody take over and run it. I'm optimistic the leadership would address it and find some solution, I think we're going to see the Dynasty reopening."

There are a couple more projects being developed on Tinian, one of which is the Alter City Group's multibillion-dollar hotel resort and golf course. Bridge Investment Group is another investor that plans to build two hotels and in the process wants to reopen the inter-island ferry between Tinian and Saipan.

"There are still ongoing projects. I've heard that Alter City just got their notice and permits completed. [Department of Public Lands] still has some concerns, but I think they are still meeting with DPL officials to clear things up before they begin construction," said Borja.

MCC

From Page 1

MCC International counsels Robert J. O'Connor and Joseph E. Horey said they are withdrawing their pending motion to quash the warrant after reviewing U.S. Labor Secretary Thomas E. Perez's application for a warrant and OSHA officer Rick Foster's declaration supporting the application.

In a statement yesterday, Imperial Pacific International (CNMI), LLC said it continues to value and promote a healthy and safe work environment.

"IPI welcomes authorized federal and local agencies to inspect its Garapan construction site. IPI will coordinate authorized inspections of the Garapan site with MCC International Saipan, Ltd. Co., the principal contractor of the Garapan project.

"IPI's principal goal is to complete construction of its Garapan project in a timely manner to ensure maximum benefit to the CNMI. IPI believes it will benefit from the inspections and welcomes guidance from inspectors.

"Following a review of the legal proceedings involving the *ex parte* warrant, it has been decided that all legal proceedings contesting the warrant will be withdrawn to facilitate the above objectives.

"IPI will continue to cooperate with all relevant stakeholders of the Garapan project. IPI is committed to the CNMI and its future growth," the statement adds.

O'Connor and Horey also asked the court last Friday afternoon to vacate the briefing and hearing schedule on the motion to quash.

Following this, U.S. District Court for the NMI Chief Judge Ramona V. Manglona withdrew yesterday the emergency motion to quash and vacated its briefing schedule and hearing.

Manglona had set a hearing on MCC International's emergency motion to quash for Wednesday, Dec. 21.

Perez had asked the federal court on Thursday to issue an *ex parte* warrant to inspect the construction project after Foster, an OSHA compliance safety and health officer, was allegedly denied entry to the site.

Ex parte means an application to the court by one of the parties to the action without the other party being present or heard.

Perez, through assistant U.S. attorney James Benedetto, said that, on Dec. 6, 2016, Foster arrived at the construction project to inspect it following a reported death of a worker at the worksite and a complaint reported to OSHA.

On Friday, MCC International filed the emergency motion to quash. O'Connor and Horey asserted that the warrant was not supported by proper administrative probable cause.

O'Connor and Horey said under the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, a warrant is required for non-consensual administrative searches, including OSHA inspections.

Perez, through Benedetto, filed yesterday his opposition to the motion to quash. Benedetto said the range of injuries and the possibility of daily exposures to unsafe conditions more than justifies the OSHA warrant.

Benedetto said information that points to the potential for injured workers being brought out of the CNMI without necessary treatment must be investigated.

Benedetto said most companies find it to their advantage to work with OSHA to assure that their employees are working in safe conditions.

"There is more than sufficient probable cause for the warrant as granted by this court," he said.

MCC International reported to OSHA that an onsite worker had a heart attack and died on Dec. 4, 2016.

Benedetto said Foster went to the site last Dec. 6 to inquire about the death and he observed what appeared to be workers exposed to fall hazards.

Benedetto said the court should deny MCC's motion to quash so that OSHA can conduct its inspection pursuant to its warrant and continue its mission of protecting workers.

Winners enjoy *Star Wars* Saipan premiere

By MICHAEL T SANTOS
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REPORTER

Star Wars fans rejoiced upon the release of the newest fanboy movie, *Rogue One: A Star Wars Movie* on island. Some were more excited than others after winning free tickets for the movie's premiere, sponsored by Aloha Maid and Royal Mill last Thursday at Regal Theatres.

Winners won four tickets each along with a $35 gift card for concession purposes just by purchasing six packs of Aloha Maid or four packs of Royal Mills Coffee.

Guy Pudney, resident manager for Marpac Inc., said, "This is just a way for us to give back to our customers. It's also a way for us to team up with wonderful organizations like Regal Theatres to promote a hit movie so many people enjoy."

Aloha Maid drinks were also given away for free at the premiere.

"It's just a way to promote our drinks as well as give the winners the chance to use the gift cards for food at the concession stand," Pudney said.

Ivan Ilmov, president of the Rotary Club Saipan, said, "My daughter and I really love Star Wars. It's amazing to be able to be one of the first people to see it on island."

Anastastia Ilmov said, "I really enjoyed the movie and what Aloha Maid did was very nice. I also thought the drinks they provided were so delicious."

"It's an amazing thing Aloha did for the community. The moment we got in, staff were offering us drinks and asking if we needed anything," Ivan Ilmov said.

Mount Carmel School president Galvin Deleon Guerrero said, "I think the promo was great! I actually saw a couple people who wanted the tickets but weren't Star Wars fans. I find that this event may just bring in more support to both the company of Aloha and the Star Wars franchise."

Deleon Guerrero has been a fan of Star Wars since he was 6 years old and even dressed up as Obi-Wan Kenobi, a Jedi character from the franchise.

The movie premiere marks the last promotional event for Aloha in 2016. More are in the works for the beginning of the following year. For more information and possible giveaways, follow Aloha Maid on their Facebook page.

Aloha Maid Staff, in charge of distributing tickets to winners, pose for a photo during the premiere of *Star Wars: Rogue One* at the Regal Theatres in San Jose on Dec. 15. MICHAEL T. SANTOS

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Marianas-*chan* auditions

The Marianas Visitors Authority will hold open auditions on Jan. 7, 2017, on Saipan for "Marianas-chan" (Marianas child) to help promote the Northern Mariana Islands in Japan. The contest is open to U.S. citizen children ages 4-6 who reside in the CNMI. Additional details and applications are available at www.mymarianas.com, and the deadline to apply is Dec. 30, 2016. Interested contestants from Tinian and Rota are invited to submit an application with a 1-2 minute video of the contestant to info@mymarianas.com for call back to the audition. For more information, contact the MVA at 1.670.664.3200/01. ***(MVA)***

Survivors, caregivers support meeting

All people facing cancer, their family members, and caregivers are invited to the next Commonwealth Cancer Association monthly support meeting scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 22, 2016, starting at 5:30pm at the Hyatt Regency Saipan's Chamolinian Room. To RSVP or for more information, call CCA at 682-0050 or email at ccamarianas@gmail.com or cca@ccamarianas.org. ***(PR)***

Kagman schools' PTSA meeting today

This is to inform all parents, guardians, and the community that the Kagman cluster schools will be having a PTSA meeting today, Dec. 20, 2016, at 5pm in the Kagman High School cafeteria. We are encouraging all parents and guardians to attend this meeting. Please call the school at 237-3921 or 664-4100 if you have questions or concerns. ***(PR)***

Air force training at Warning Area 517

ASAN, Guam—The U.S. Air Force will conduct training at Warning Area 517 on Dec. 20-22, from 8:30am to 10pm. The general public, especially fishermen, commercial pilots and marine tour operators are advised to stay clear of the areas during the date and times indicated. W-517 is activated south of latitude 12° 40' 00"N. All vessels are advised to remain clear of W-517 south of latitude 12° 40' 00"N. Santa Rosa Reef and Galvez Bank are open for public use. ***(PR)***

Water outages in Oleai, CK

Residents of Oleai and Chalan Kanoa will experience daily water service interruption until Dec. 23. The interruptions will be from 3am to 5am, as part of an ongoing leak detection program. For more information, contact the Commonwealth Utilities Cop. Customer Call Center at 664-4282. ***(PR)***

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JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Job Title: Computer Network Support Specialist

Provide technical assistance to computer users. Answer questions or resolve computer problems. The employee may provide assistance concerning the use of computer hardware and software, including printing, installation, word processing, electronic mail, and operating systems.

Tasks

- Oversee the daily performance of computer systems
- Configure wide area network (WAN) or local area network (LAN) routers or related equipment.
- Identify and troubleshoot the causes of networking or connectivity problems for users or user groups using diagnostic testing software and equipment.
- Provide telephone support related to networking or connectivity issues.
- Evaluate local area network (LAN) or wide area network (WAN) performance data to ensure sufficient availability or speed, to identify network problems, or for disaster recovery purposes.
- Analyze network data to determine network usage, disk space availability, or server function.
- Install network software or equipment for employee use, performing or ensuring proper installation of cables, operating systems, or appropriate software.
- Maintain records of daily data communication transactions, problems and remedial actions taken, or installation activities.
- Read technical manuals, confer with users, or conduct computer diagnostics to investigate and resolve problems or to provide technical assistance and support.
- Perform routine maintenance or standard repairs to networking components or equipment.
- Refer major hardware or software problems or defective products to vendors or technicians for service.
- Run monthly network reports.
- Responsible for generating daily inventory transfer reports; monthly itemized sales report and other reports as requested by management.
- Research hardware or software products to meet technical networking or security needs.
- Performs other related duties as assigned.

Skills and Qualifications: Problem solving skill, Time Management and Organization Skill, Written and Verbal Communication Skill, System Analysis and Troubleshooting Skills, Analytical Thinking skill.

Qualification Requirement
Any combination equivalent to graduation with an Associate's degree plus five years of related work experience.

PTC offers a competitive salary to correspond with experience and qualification. Interested person may pick up an employment application at our office in Puerto Rico. Deadline for submission is no later than 5:00pm on December 23, 2016.

Pacific Trading Company is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

WANTED

NEWS REPORTER

The *Saipan Tribune* is looking for a FULL-TIME news reporter.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Above average writing skills and can work within deadlines;
- Fast learner, self-starter, and a team player;
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- With photography skills;
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If you have what it takes to be part of a dynamic team, email your résumé and samples of your work to editor@saipantribune.com. You may also drop it off at the *Saipan Tribune* office on the second floor of the JP Center Building on Beach Road, Garapan. ON-ISLAND HIRES PREFERRED.

Saipan Tribune, Inc. is an equal opportunity employer.
Qualified women, minorities, and disabled persons are encouraged to apply.

High Court affirms Guiao conviction and sentence

On Dec. 19, 2016, the Supreme Court issued its opinion in *Commonwealth v Carmelita Guiao*, 2016 MP 15. The Court affirmed Guiao's conviction of assault with a dangerous weapon and sentence of 10 years.

Guiao was found guilty of striking her live-in partner John Saimon with a vehicle.

Guiao appealed, arguing that her conviction and sentence should be vacated because the trial court erred by denying her motion for mistrial and improperly admitting testimony of a non-expert witness. Because Guiao's opening brief did not cite to any legal authority, the high court ordered her to file a supplemental brief to remedy the defect, which Guiao subsequently filed.

The high court, having reviewed the parties' briefs and heard oral arguments, decided that Guiao's arguments would not be considered on appeal because they were not adequately argued, a violation of Supreme Court Rule 28(a)(9)(A). The high court found Guiao's legal analysis cursory and conclusory, and found the cases cited by Guiao irrelevant.

The court noted that NMI Supreme Court Rules require that parties' briefs contain legal arguments and analysis with citations to applicable authorities and that these rules are not simply advisory but fundamental to the adversarial system of justice.

The court stated "Before we can address the merits of an appeal, we must be first presented with those merits to examine. We are 'not simply a depository which the appealing party may dump the burden of argument and research.'" The court further noted that it cannot act as an advocate of any party but only as arbiters of law. Because Guiao failed to properly present her arguments despite multiple opportunities to do so, the court affirmed the trial court's judgment.

The Supreme Court's full opinion is available at http://www.cnmilaw.org/supreme16.html. ***(NMI Judiciary)***

Glenna SP Reyes is Torres' new senior policy adviser

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres recently appointed former Legislative Bureau director Glenna SP Reyes to serve as his senior policy adviser.

As the newest member to his Cabinet, Reyes fills a vacancy made early this year.

"I have known Mrs. Reyes even before my career began in the Legislature. Given her experience at the helm of the bureau and as a legislative staffer for many years, I believe she can bring a great deal of insight and contributions to our team," Torres said.

Reyes said she is honored to return to public service after spending a few years in the private sector.

"I am honored for the opportunity to serve Governor Torres in this capacity. I look forward to assisting the governor in developing policies and strategies to support the vision of improving the Commonwealth. I thank Governor Torres for his confidence and I share his vision for the CNMI and I am excited to be part of the team to assist him as he drives the CNMI forward to advance the capacity of our island communities," Reyes said.

Torres said the senior policy adviser strengthens an already diverse group of individuals who have steadily helped achieve the goals of the administration.

"As we welcome in a new Legislature, we know that new challenges will definitely arise, and we can now ensure we are better informed and advised on essential matters with all branches of government," Torres said.

Reyes formerly chaired the CNMI Scholarship advisory board and as vice president of the CNMI Parent Advisory Council. Under the former president of the CNMI Farmers Cooperative Association, she helped develop and implement operational and financial strategies that secured a grant to integrate clean and energy-efficient resources at the Garapan Public Market.

Reyes previously served as the Legislative Bureau director from 2008 to 2011, after serving the bureau as its deputy director for two years. Prior to this, Reyes worked as a legislative staffer in the House of Representatives for two years and eight years in the Senate. Reyes earned her bachelor's degree in Business Administration and a master's degree in Management from Argosy University, Graduate School of Business and Management.

She officially began her assignment last Monday. ***(PR)***

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS JUDICIARY

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB17-JUDICIARY-03

SUBMISSION DATE: JANUARY 4, 2017 **TIME: 10:00 A.M.**

"PURCHASE OF A NEW 4X4/AWD 5 DOOR UTILITY VEHICLE FOR THE CNMI JUDICIARY, DRUG COURT"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE CASHIER WINDOW, DOOR #5, LOCATED AT THE GUMA HUSTISIA / IIMWAL AWEEWE / HOUSE OF JUSTICE, SUSUPE, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ HON. ALEXANDRO C. CASTRO
CHIEF JUSTICE

/S/ JOHN T. VILLAGOMEZ
JUDICIARY PROCUREMENT OFFICER

Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
1 Lower Navy Hill Road Navy Hill, Saipan, MP 96950

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
RFP16-CHCC/FACILITY-007

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: JANUARY 27, 2017 TIME: 11:00AM
OPENING DATE: JANUARY 30, 2017 TIME: 10:00AM

"FOR HOUSEKEEPING SERVICES – COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION"

COPIES OF THE ITB PACKET MAY BE PICKED-UP AT CHCC PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY DIVISION-MEDICAL SUPPLY STORAGE FACILITY LOWER BASE SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE CHCC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL PROPOSALS AND TO WAIVE ANY IMPERFECTIONS IN ANY PROPOSAL, IF TO DO SO SHALL BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE CHCC. ALL PROPOSALS SHALL BECOME THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEATHCARE CORPORATION.

/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ JESUS D. BABAUTA
ACTING CHCC DIRECTOR OF P&S

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT
OF THE
COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

Henry P. Manipon Petitioner,	)	FCD-DI CIVIL ACTION NO. 16-0530
vs.	)	**SUMMONS FOR PUBLICATION**
Lenibeth Crisostomo Manipon Respondent,	)	

TO THE ABOVE NAME RESPONDENT:

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED and notified to file any answer you wish to make to the Complaint, a copy of which is on file with the court, within thirty (30) days after service of the Summons upon you, and to deliver or mail a copy of your answer to the Petitioner whose address is PMB 309, P.O. Box 10001 as soon as practical after filing your answer or sending it to the Clerk of Courts for filing.

Your answer should be in writing and filed with the Clerk of this Court at P.O. Box 500307 Susupe, Saipan, MP 96950. It may be prepared for you by your counsel and sent to the Clerk of this Court by messenger or mail. It is not necessary for you to appear personally until further notice. If you fail to file an answer in accordance with this summons, judgment by default may be taken against you for relief in the complaint.

Dated this 26th day of October, 2016

/s/ Clerk of Court

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2015 Toyota Yaris
White, HB, Auto, STK#U16-118R
WAS $14,999
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Auto, Lt Blue, STK#U16-124R
WAS $14,999
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Auto, Silver, STK#U16-134R
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Auto, Silver, STK#U16-125R
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Orange, AT, STK#U16-096R
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NOW $16,499*

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White, STK#U16-101R
WAS $17,099
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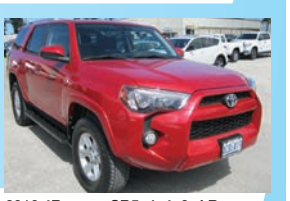
2013 4Runner SR5
Black, 4x4, 6-Cyl, STK#U16-092T
WAS $26,999
NOW $22,999*

2012 4Runner SR5
Gray, 2WD, 6-Cyl, STK#U16-094T
WAS $26,599
NOW $23,999*



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Paskong Pinoy draws Filipino crowd

By MICHAEL T SANTOS
michael.santos@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
United Filipino Organization members and emcees call for participants during the annual celebration of *Paskong Pinoy* held at the covered parking lot of the Marianas Business Plaza in Susupe on Dec. 18.

Whether it was for the clothes being sold, the food vendors, or just to have a good time, the Filipino community came in droves to the United Filipino Organization's annual *Paskong Pinoy* held in Susupe last Sunday.

Bishop Ryan Jimenez led the invocation followed by the national anthem performed by Donato Santiago. UFO president Bong Malasarte did his welcoming remarks and opening songs were played soon, courtesy of Bonie Gio Sagana. Richard Babac and Minda Castro were the masters of ceremonies.

In his role as outgoing UFO president, Malasarte said, "We just want to have a special celebration for the Filipino community. There are some of us who can't spend it with loved ones in the Philippines so I hope events like this make it up."

This year's *Paskong Pinoy* highlighted a game called *Kuwarta o Kahon*, in which a contestant has the option to choose a cash prize or an unknown amount within a box. The grand prize was $1,500.

One attendee, Ron Pascual, said, "I was riding past this place on my bike earlier today and they told me to come over for the event. It's fun, I like the food and it's a nice thing to do for the Filipino community."

UFO extends its thanks to all sponsors, participants, and volunteers. "I would just like to thank everyone who helped in any way. Without them, the event would not have been a success," Malasarte said.

Performances for the daylong event included the Emperador Band with Gemma, Uncle Ben's Kids, Out of the Ordinary Band, Erica, Lawrence and Justin Tubera, Kristo Rai Youth Choir, Santiago Siblings, Mikaella Cunanan, Green Meadow School of Performing Arts, Juliet Inocencio, 29:11 Dance Group, Pinoy Attention, Saipan Music and Dance, and Uncle Ben's Teens.

Nonfood vendors on site sold a myriad of merchandises that ranged from accessories to bags and footwear. Others present even advertised Filipino and locally made dishes.

UFO has been hosting the *Paskong Pinoy* celebration for many years now. It usually coincides with the Catholic Church's Midnight Masses from Dec. 16 to Dec. 24.

Customs officer, an ideal career

By JON PEREZ
jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

JON PEREZ
Members of the 6th cycle take their oath after completing the Customs Basic Training last week.

Marivic de Castro Quichocho is hoping more women would someday follow her footsteps and become customs officers of the CNMI Division of Customs Service. The 44-year-old Tinian resident was among the 10 members of the 6th cycle that completed customs basic training held Thursday at Building A of the Saipan seaport.

She's the lone female graduate and was joined by Vincent Ubag Reyes Jr. from Tinian, while Gaylord Masga Manglona and David Vince Manglona Ogo represented Rota. Julio Kamantique Cruz, Alfred Sasamoto Santos II, Luis Javin Crisostomo Untalan, Zachary Jaime Benavente Sasamoto, Kelvin Travis Flores Sablan, and Philip John Deleon Guerrero Sablan are from Saipan.

Quichocho said she had been working at Customs for 10 years as a baggage inspector but it was only recently that she decided to try being a customs officer. "At first, I was hesitant to join but I decided to give it a shot as an alternative career."

"I just hope more women would join and become customs officers. It is a proud moment for me and for my family. I learned a lot of new things. Now, I'm ready to put into use these skills," added Quichocho.

She said they went through more than 10 months of training, as they needed to complete 288 hours of drills and other seminars. She almost gave up, especially in the physical test part of their training.

"You're running for a number of miles at around 3:30pm, under the heat of the sun. I almost gave up. It was really tough but I kept on praying, and thought of my husband and kids," said Quichocho, who felt relief at completing the course.

Another interesting sidelight of the ceremony was when Rep. John Paul Sablan (R-Saipan) proudly pinned the badge on his son, Philip John Sablan, in a symbolic gesture as if passing on the torch. The elder Sablan, who is also the chairman of the Saipan and Northern Islands Legislative Delegation, is a former customs officer before being elected a lawmaker in Precinct 3.

CNMI Attorney General Edward J. Manibusan administered the oath of the 10 new customs officers. There are now close to 20 women who are working at Customs with the addition of Quichocho.

Lt. Gov. Victor B. Hocog, who was acting governor last week, led other CNMI officials in attending the simple but meaningful ceremony. He was joined by Cabinet secretaries Larrisa Larson (Finance) and Edith Deleon Guerrero (Labor).

Senate President Francisco M. Borja (Ind-Tinian), Senate Vice President Arnold I. Palacios (R-Saipan), Republican Sens. Steve K. Mesngon and Teresita Santos from Rota, and Tinan Sen. Francisco Q. Cruz, Reps. Edwin K. Propst, Joseph Leepan Guerrero, Blas Jonathan Attao, George Camacho, Edwin Aldan, and Glenn Maratita were the other CNMI Legislature members who attended the event.

Acting mayor Antonia Tudela (Saipan), Mayors Joey Patrick San Nicolas (Tinian) and Efraim Atalig (Rota) joined other officials from the Department of Public Safety, Department of Corrections, U.S. Marshalls, Drug Enforcement Administration, CNMI Ports Police, and Customs Border Patrol.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality
Division of Coastal Resources Management
P.O. Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: (670) 664-8300; Fax: (670) 664-8315
www.crm.gov.mp
Frank M. Rabauliman, Administrator
Frances A. Castro, Director, DCRM

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Division of Coastal Resources Management (DCRM) will be holding a public hearing for the Proper Grand (CNMI), LLC's proposed construction and operation of the Chalan Laulau Hotel & Dormitories (CRM permit application no. SMS-2017-X-003) and the Gualo Rai Hotel & Dormitories (CRM permit application no. SMS-2017-X-010) projects. The Chalan Laulau Hotel & Dormitories is located within an existing residential and business area. This project will rehabilitate two existing abandoned buildings, add a new building and a 3rd floor "canteen" building that can seat 39 guests with first and second level parking. The Gualo Rai Hotel and Dormitories will be constructed in Lower Gualo Rai within an existing "village commercial" and "rural" zone on the former "cockfight arena" property. This project will be demolishing the damaged cockfight arena to construct one new 3-story business hotel with 46 guest rooms, a restaurant seating up to 120 guests and three new 3-story dormitories with 348 beds.

A public hearing is scheduled for January 10, 2016, at 5:00PM at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multipurpose Center in Susupe, Saipan.

Written comments may be submitted to the DCRM Office, Suite 305, Gualo Rai Center, Middle Road, Gualo Rai, Saipan, or mailed to the Division of Coastal Resources Management, Caller Box 10007 or by fax at 664-8315. The project file is open for review and comments during regular business hours from 7:30 A.M. – 4:30 P.M, Monday thru Friday. All written and oral comments received by DCRM will be included as part of the permit application record and will be considered in any decisions concerning the proposed projects.

Please contact the DCRM at 664-8300/1 if you have any questions or would like to learn more about the Chalan Laulau Hotel & Dormitories and the Gualo Rai Hotel & Dormitories projects.

/s/ Frances A. Castro
Director
Division of Coastal Resources Management

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
3rd Floor, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building
P.O. Box 501220 CK Saipan, MP 96950-1220
Telephone: (670) 664-4282
Facsimile: (670) 235-5131

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to the Open Government Act (1 CMC §9901 et seq), the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation ("CUC") Board of Directors hereby informs the general public that the Board meeting held on Friday, December 16, 2016, at 10:00 a.m., was recessed and continued to Wednesday, December 28, 2016, at 10:00 a.m. The meeting will be held at the CUC Conference Room, Room 17, 3rd Floor, Joeten Dandan Building to continue in Executive Session under the remaining Agenda as follows:

AGENDA*

I. Executive Session**
1. Consultation with Legal Counsel on Personnel and Operation Matters
2. Update on Power Plant I Expansion

II. Board Reports Miscellaneous Administrative Matters/New Business
1. Personnel Committee
2. Operation Committee

III. Adjournment

* Pursuant to 1 CMC § 9912, the Agenda maybe modified during the meeting.
** Pursuant to 1 CMC § 9912, the Board of Directors may vote to meet in executive session at any time.

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT
INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB17-SAR-057
SUBMISSION DATE: JANUARY 18, 2017 TIME: 10:00A.M.
"SECURITY SERVICES FOR THE OFFICE OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE & REHABILITATION FACILITY IN MARPI"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATION MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY, LOCATED AT THE FORMER EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE, ASCENCION DRIVE, BUILDING NO. 1301, CAPITOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCURMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECTS ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ YVETTE R. SABLAN
SPECIAL ASSISTANT FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE & REHABILITATION
/S/ HERMAN S. SABLAN
DIRECTOR OF P&S

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT
INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB17-SAR-058
SUBMISSION DATE: JANUARY 04, 2017 TIME: 10:00A.M.
"PURCHASE OF A MID SIZE PICK UP TRUCK WITH TOWING PACKAGE FOR THE OFFICE OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE & REHABILITATION"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATION MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY, LOCATED AT THE FORMER EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE, ASCENCION DRIVE, BUILDING NO. 1301, CAPITOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCURMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECTS ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ YVETTE R. SABLAN
SPECIAL ASSISTANT FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE & REHABILITATION
/S/ HERMAN S. SABLAN
DIRECTOR OF P&S

Make-A-Wish sends off one beneficiary

By MICHAEL T SANTOS
michael.santos@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Jackie Doctor, center, poses with staff from DFS, Make A Wish Foundation, as well as friends and family for a light-hearted send off at the Surf Club on Dec. 17.

MICHAEL T. SANTOS

Wish kid Jackie Doctor joined friends, family, the many the people behind the Make-A-Wish Foundation, and DFS staff at the Surf Club for a light-hearted send-off before her departure to Disneyland.

Doctor and her family left Saipan yesterday, Dec. 19, and will meet up with her sister in Disneyland. Her trip will cost approximately $5,000.

Her mother, Tina Doctor, said, "I'm so thankful for everything that the foundation is doing, not only for my daughter but for our entire family. Actually, thank you isn't enough to show our appreciation and we'll be forever grateful to them."

Doctor, 17, from Mount Carmel School, said, "I'm really excited for the upcoming trip! I'm so thankful I'm having my wish granted as well as to be able to bring my family with me so we can be together during Christmas [is a blessing]."

Jackie has a medical condition known as systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), a chronic inflammatory disease. It is characterized by an autoantibody response to nuclear and cytoplasmic antigens. SLE can affect any organ system, but it mainly involves the skin, joints, kidneys, blood cells, and nervous system.

Doctor would be about the fifth wish granted by Make-A-Wish this year.

Eleanor Cabrera, CNMI board member representative, said, "This was meant to be a lighthearted lunch gathering to just touch base with the family and see if things are running smoothly."

Also present for the send-off were some DFS staff. The company donated traveling necessities to Doctor as well a held fundraiser for the foundation.

Jamika Reyes-Taijeron, promotions manager for DFS Saipan, said, "We've been working with Make A Wish Foundation for many years now and it's one of the many ways we try to give back to the community."

The fundraising accumulated over $1,800 but will continue until January. Several fundraising events include a raffle, selling of soba to employees, a bake sale, and the Make-A- Wish tree in their store.

"We just want to earn as much as possible to help the foundation," Taijeron said.

For those wishing to donate, visit the T Galleria to purchase a Make-A-Wish Star to be placed on the Christmas tree that decorates the building. Each star costs $10 and will have buyers writing their personal wish for the recipient.

The Guam Legislature presented certificates of recognition to short-film directors Sarah Filush, Tristan Gonzales, Marissa Ricalde, and Docomo Pacific creative manager and producer Bobby Bonifacio Jr. on Dec. 2, at the Guam Legislature.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Guam Legislature recognizes Docomo Pacific shorts

TAMUNING, Guam—The Guam Legislature presented certificates of recognition to Docomo Pacific 2016 short-film directors, in honor of their commitment to feature and create awareness for social issues facing our island today, highlighting racism, bullying, suicide, and cancer survivorship.

Members of the 33rd Guam Legislature presented the awards to short-film directors Sarah Filush, Tristan Gonzales, Marissa Ricalde, and Docomo Pacific creative manager and producer Bobby Bonifacio Jr. on Dec. 2, at the Guam Legislature.

Among the members in attendance were Sen. Dennis G. Rodriguez Jr., Sen. Benjamin J.F. Cruz, Sen. Tina Muna Barnes, and Sen. Frank B. Aguon Jr.

The films were first released at an invitation-only screening for the 2016 Guam International Film Festival on Nov. 16. Among the three featured Docomo Pacific short films were, *Shoebox Memories*, directed by Ricalde *See You Later*, directed by Gonzales, and People's Choice Award winner for GIFF 2016, *Kids From Chuuk*, directed by Filush.

"This is the second year of Docomo Pacific shorts, and we are happy at how enthusiastic the community has been toward the films we produced. We look forward to touching more lives and supporting new talent in the years to come," said Rodriguez.

"It's very important that today we recognize [the directors] and recognize the local talent that we have in Guam, and also recognize the producers, Bobby [Bonifacio Jr.] and Docomo Pacific, for being able to inspire them and helping them live out this dream," said Bonifacio. ***(PR)***

Sixty-four business and community volunteers joined the Japan Saipan Travel Association in their annual cleanup of downtown Garapan on Dec. 17, 2016, in preparation for more tourists arriving during the holiday season.

MVA

JSTA leads holiday cleanup

In preparation for higher visitor arrivals during Christmas and New Year's, the Japan Saipan Travel Association and its tourism partners conducted a cleanup of the main tourist district of Garapan on Dec. 17, 2016.

Sixty-four volunteers representing 19 companies joined the cleanup beginning at 6:30am. Volunteers, including children, spread out and cleaned up along both the roadside and the beach from American Memorial Park to the Carolinian Affairs Office. The groups and companies joining JSTA in the beautification effort included the Consular Office of Japan, Northern Marianas Dive Operators Association, Marianas Visitors Authority, Micronesia Islands Nature Alliance, Pacific Development Inc., Pacific Micronesia Tours, R&C Tours, H.I.S. Saipan. Good Care Saipan, Himawari Kenbukai, MASA Dive, Make Sure Diving, Aqua Connections Inc., K.C.A. Corporation, Sakura Marine, Aqua Soul, S2 Club, and Mariana Sports Club.

The cleanup effort netted about 150 lbs of trash. ***(MVA)***

Opinion

Hafa Adai
Saipan Tribune
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EDITORIAL

AP ANALYSIS:

Will oil producers' cut have lasting impact?

By GEORGE JAHN
ASSOCIATED PRESS

VIENNA (AP)—It seems like a big deal. But the joint production cut from OPEC and non-OPEC countries—the first in 15 years—might push up the price of oil less than the nations involved are banking on.

At over $50 a barrel, oil prices remained buoyant and well above recent norms on Monday, reflecting the cutbacks to production agreed to this weekend—and with reason.

Less than two weeks after members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting countries agreed to pare 1.2 million barrels a day of their production, they were joined by nearly a dozen outsiders Saturday who pledged an addition daily 558,000-barrel cut.

On Monday, the price of U.S. benchmark crude rose $1.33, or 2.6 percent, to settle at $52.83 per barrel in New York. The price of Brent crude, the international standard, rose $1.36, or 2.5 percent, to finish at $55.69 a barrel in London.

The OPEC cutback alone would have been noteworthy as the first time in eight years the cartel was able to agree on such a move. That, the additional reduction by other 11 nations, and Saudi Arabia's pledge to cut its production even further if needed, is leaving even hard-nosed analysts impressed.

Jason Schenker of Prestige Economics calls Saturday's decision "a historic deal," and there is little doubt that in the short term the combined cut will result in somewhat more pricey oil—and, by extension, car fuel, heating and electricity.

But the upward trend might soon peter out, leaving prices well short of the highs of around $100 a barrel last seen two years ago.

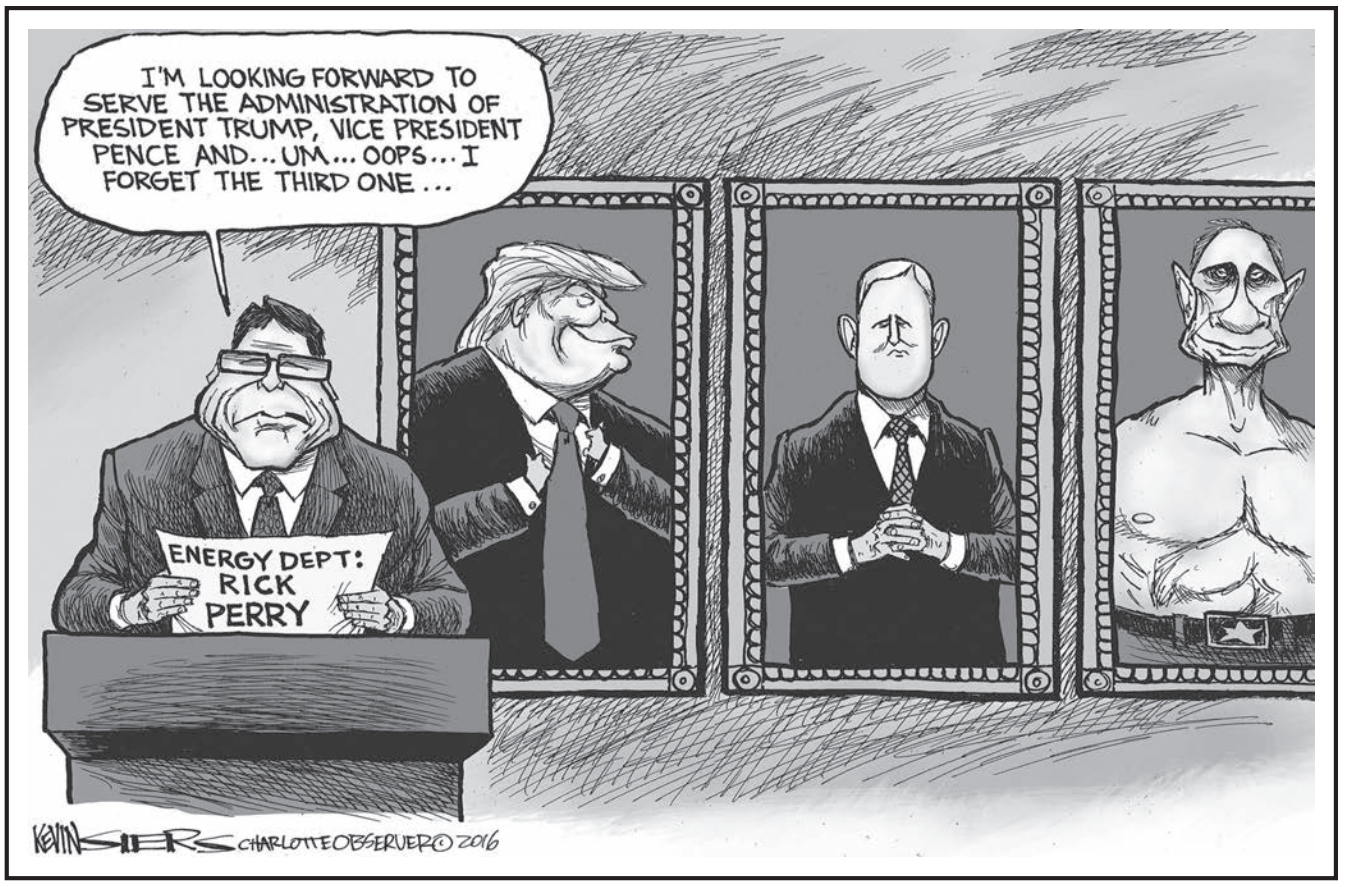
President-elect Donald Trump has promised to free up more oil drilling in the U.S., which would increase global supply. More U.S. shale oil, which was unprofitable to produce at the price lows around $35 a barrel touched earlier this year, could become viable again, further increasing supply.

And demand is not expected to rise strongly, as the world economy struggles. China's economy, with its massive, energy-hungry manufacturing sector, is slowing. And Europe's economy, a net importer of oil and gas, is stagnant.

Compliance is also an issue.

Past OPEC attempts to reduce output and push prices upward have failed due to members pumping above their quotas. That contributed to the worldwide glut that combined with feeble economies of consuming countries to bring down prices to as low as $35 early this year. And outside OPEC, some of the cutbacks will be difficult to

See AP ANALYSIS on Next Page


I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO SERVE THE ADMINISTRATION OF PRESIDENT TRUMP, VICE PRESIDENT PENCE AND...UM...OOPS...I FORGET THE THIRD ONE...
ENERGY DEPT: RICK PERRY
KEVIN SIERS CHARLOTTE OBSERVER © 2016

Where is the United States' infrastructure boom?

By TRUDY RUBIN
The Philadelphia Inquirer

Trudy Rubin is a columnist and editorial-board member for the Philadelphia Inquirer. *Readers may write to her at:* Philadelphia Inquirer, *P.O. Box 8263, Philadelphia, Pa. 19101, or by email at trubin@phillynews.com.*

SHENZHEN, China—While Donald Trump has been deciding whether to go *mano a mano* with China's leaders, I've been traveling from Beijing to Shanghai to this southern city, with a stop at China's technology capital in Shenzhen.

I've seen an infrastructure network of bullet trains, glistening new rail stations and airports—all of them with clean toilets—that Americans can only dream of. Especially if they have to travel through New York City's Penn Station or Kennedy airport.

Like presidents before him, Trump has promised to produce an infrastructure bonanza, but we have no idea what he will deliver. According to a June study by the McKinsey Global Institute, infrastructure investment has fallen in 10 major economies, including the United States, since the 2008 financial crisis, while China is building like crazy.

"China spends more on economic infrastructure annually than North America and Western Europe combined," the report said. After my experience of Chinese trains, planes, and automobiles, that's easy to believe.

The massive Beijing South Railway Station, built in 2008, is bullet-train only with hundreds of people seated in an enormous waiting room before departures to several major cities. Somehow the crowds are amazingly orderly, surrounded by neon billboards and all manner of eateries, with a busy Starbucks at one end. The 909-mile trip from Beijing to Shanghai takes five to six hours, with plush red seats and young women attendants wheeling service carts with food down the aisles.

Shanghai itself is a massive infrastructure project. When I first visited in 1986, the Pudong district—east of the Huangpu River and across from the historic city center—was little more than a marsh, and Shanghai was a city of bicycles with hardly any cars. Today, Pudong has morphed into China's financial center and looks like New York on steroids, with elegant high-rises lit up in neon at night in bright colors as a backdrop to the river.

Shanghai's main international airport, in Pudong, opened in 1999. But what fascinated me was the Shanghai Hongqiao airport, mainly for regional flights, from which I flew to Shenzhen, near Hong Kong. I expected something modest, but this airport was massively expanded for the Shanghai Expo in 2010 and is still gleaming. It is filled with high-end shops such as Hermes and Coach—aimed at local Chinese—along with Starbucks and Dunkin' Donuts.

And the huge crowds are channeled into numerous parallel security lines that pass through in surprisingly little time.

Shenzhen's Bao'an International Airport also has undergone major expansion in the last five years. This city, located just north of Hong Kong, is a Chinese hub of technology and innovation and home to the massive campus of Huawei, the largest telecommunications equipment manufacturer in the world, with 170,000 employees. Walking through the leafy setting, watching young employees on compulsory lunch break (50,000 of them pass daily through multiple cafeterias with good looking fresh food), I could have been strolling through a U.S. university campus.

Shenzhen, with a population of 10 million, is also a high-rise business hub and shopping destination. I couldn't help remembering my previous visit in 1986, when it was little more than a muddy small town of about 50,000.

Of course, China's infrastructure splurge can't be viewed as a model for upgrading America's woefully underfunded roads, bridges, airports, and train stations. The Chinese government made a decision to direct a massive investment of funds, and propelled provincial government spending, in ways that will never happen in the United States.

According to Bloomberg, China spent more than $10.8 trillion in infrastructure in the last decade alone. Government and foreign investment, bonds, local taxes, and vehicle purchase taxes helped pay for construction (gasoline taxes have been resisted by the public). China's now completed national expressway network is almost all toll roads, with a nationwide E-Z pass-type system, and tolls help pay back constructions costs.

However, the Chinese infrastructure splurge was meant in part to offset weak economic growth. Some studies argue that much of it may not have been cost effective. Yet as I travel through China's train stations and airports, there seems to be a lesson here.

Perhaps the Chinese government has built overcapacity (for now). Perhaps money was wasted. But attractive train stations and airports, along with decent roads, help Chinese travel in comfort and safety, help businesses grow, and convince ordinary citizens their country is on the right track.

Riding a bullet train smoothly from Beijing to Shanghai makes me cringe at the creaky shaky Amtrak Acela Express. Passing quickly through security at Shanghai's airport makes me wonder why lines at Kennedy or Philadelphia move so slowly. Visiting spotless rest rooms makes me despair over the crummy bathrooms at just about every American train station I pass through.

We should be able to do better. We must do better, for American morale and to remain a global leader. And doing better will require a coherent plan from the White House, not just helter-skelter private projects.

Over to you, President-elect Trump.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Reunification realities

I read about our leaders working to pen an agreement with Guam and I must commend them on their effort. This is by no means meant to be an attack or to be disrespectful to the efforts to reunite with Guam as it is indeed a noble deed. But the realities of a political agreement or union may be just too unrealistic for a number of reasons. It is great to get the political nod with such a venture as reunification but in reality reunification can't be manifested in the foundation of the political ties with Guam because there have never been any real political ties between the NMI and Guam. Another inhibiting factor is the cultural fact that there was no single leadership over the ancient Chamorros as each island had its own chief so it is even a challenge to reunite under a single umbrella. The only unification existed under the short Trust Territory government and that proved to be a temporary fix.

Regardless of which road we decide to travel, they both pose significant challenges. But for the purposes of this essay let's start with the political route since this is our second or third attempt at the political reunification route. Political Science dictates that it would be an insurmountable task to reunite Guam with the NMI due to the immense pressure that will be exerted for control over the political power in governing. It is for this reason we can't forget the Chamorros of Guam lobbied against the NMI on many political issues when the NMI was pushing to become a commonwealth. There is also the fact that the Chamorros of Guam voted against the CNMI joining them in the American family, which was a slap in the face the CNMI that we're only now getting over. So history has already taught the NMI that Guam don't want to be politically connected and the question is why or what made them change their minds or if they have even changed their minds.

As for the Political Science perspective of reunification it all revolves around "money and power" and Guam is not going to readily give up money and power without something in return of value. So the question is what do we have to offer Guam and we all know the answer is nothing much—yet! When you think of sharing political power with Guam you must consider who has the biggest population, who is the biggest bread winner. You can bet Guam will be demanding more representation in government and most of the budget and will control most of the major elections, especially for the executive office and Senate seats. So I ask, will the people of the CNMI really submit to a primarily Guam rule over our government? I don't think so! As you can see a political tie is far-reaching, to say the least.

Now let's take a look at reunification by reweaving the social or cultural fabric of the NMI and Guam into a single cloth. I am hopeful that readers will agree that the number one goal of reunification is to "protect, preserve, and promote" the Chamorro nation's future and ancestry in an effort maintain the Chamorro nation perpetually." What matters most are the social and cultural ties that already exist that need reweaving and fixing because they have been all but severed, mainly due to politics, the ocean and distance and the high and constant rising cost of transportation.

But even in the face of rising transportation cost there are many things that can be done today that couldn't be done just a decade or two ago. By traveling the road to reweave the cultural fabric of the Chamorros, a great deal can be done to reunite with Guam by simply working with the social tools we have on hand. We can start reweaving:

1. By reuniting the language commissions of the NMI and Guam to update the Chamorro language as it is becoming more and more dysfunctional (computer terms, technology terms, medical terms and others). There is also a need to come to a consensus on some words like Chamorro or Chamorru and other things where the NMI differs from Guam.

2. By building on the reconnection of the customs and traditions (revival of warrior training and chief system with one *magalahi* for CNMI and one for Guam).

3. Via education exchange programs with the creation of a Chamorro curriculum that will contain everything about Chamorros, with a "certificate" for high school students to show they have mastered cultural preservation.

4. By establishing real ties with a liaison complex for CNMI residents to congregate in Guam and one for Guamanians on Saipan. Both societies will benefit from these installations with more unifying activities that will serve to complement family and cultural ties.

In fact, a great way to start the reunification building is through the medical referral program. I actually did a brief analysis of our medical referral program in Guam while I was in Guam for medical referral and I found some very interesting things that I actually forwarded to the governor for consideration. First and foremost the med referral program needs to focus more on building "long-range and permanent functionality" programs, especially in Guam. Guam's new regional Medical City is now specializing in a lot of illnesses and procedures that we used to have to go to Hawaii or the Philippines. In fact, the Guam referral office is now busier than it has ever been, which is why we should prepare to be more permanent in Guam.

I know there was an effort to cut cost recently but that was based on "cutting services," which is wrong as it put lives at stake instead of making the program more cost-efficient. Housing is one of the biggest costs that could eventually be eliminated through a land swap with the government of Guam. By creating a NMI cultural complex in Guam with a hotel for referral accommodations, the medical housing issue would be solved and it would create the infrastructure for endless cultural and family connecting activities. The money we are spending on hotels in Guam is now enough to make payments on a hotel complex that we can own! Guam will also have a complex on Saipan that can be used to promote cultural and family connecting activities, making the old adage of killing two birds with one stone a reality.

There are also other cost cutting steps that can be taken and I sincerely wish our leaders the best with reunification because the Chamorro people should be unified culturally. I just know for a fact that taking a social approach to reunification will yield far more success than trying to create political ties of power. Believe me, it will take something extraordinary, dramatic or even catastrophic on a hemispheric or global scale to cause a political union between the CNMI and Guam, especially when our fathers in Washington have to agree with any political status change first. So please, don't try to put the cart in front of the horse; just fill up both carts with social goodies to help the people and never mind connecting a political horse.

Ambrose M. Bennett
Kagman, Saipan

AP ANALYSIS

From Page 10

verify, leaving no choice but to take the word of the country involved that it is fulfilling its pledge.

Noting such big ifs, analysts at German bank Commerzbank, in a research note said "we remain skeptical ... despite talk of this being a 'historic demonstration of unity.'"

"This is because we are convinced that the expectations relating to voluntary production cuts, which have been driven to excessively high levels in recent weeks by oil producers, cannot be fulfilled."

The pacing of the cuts also could dent producers' hopes that enough crude will be withdrawn in real time to push prices significantly higher in the long run.

Russia has said it will cut daily output by 300,000 barrels. But it plans to dribble out its share of the reduction over the coming months and JBC Energy said in a research note that the strategy will translate into a drop of only 80,000 Russian barrels for the first half of next year.

So, while prices are up, hopes may soon be down for the 22 nations involved that their deal will result in a return to sustained high prices—and some analysts are hedging their bets.

"Historic agreement or historic bluff?" asked Commerzbank in its note Monday.

Dreaming of a white Christmas

You probably know the song, and have heard Bing Crosby croon it: "I'm…dreaming of a white Christmas…just like the ones I used to know."

This is true for me also. As much as I love living in the Marianas, I miss snow, especially during the Christmas season. Without snow, it just doesn't feel like Christmas.

For those of you who have never had the pleasure of snow, or a white Christmas, there are quite a few stages to winter on the mainland, and they are all pretty much the same.

The first snowfall always occurs suddenly, around Thanksgiving. I remember being in third grade, in my classroom with Mrs. Batzing, and suddenly a girl named April Vogt exclaimed, "Oh look! It's snowing!" All of us kids turned to see the white flakes falling outside our classroom windows, and it was joyous. I never forgot that.

After that, the snow fell fairly regularly. Sometimes there were blizzards—ferocious snowstorms, often with ice in them—which coated the branches of the black bare trees and also the electric lines.

Sometimes the snow piled up in lawns and yards and driveways. For us kids, we could make snowmen or lie on our backs and make "snow angels" by waving our arms and legs in the snow.

For the moms and dads, snow was a nuisance. Either you shovel your sidewalk and driveway, or call a guy with a pickup—with a plow in the front.

Early in the morning, around 5 or 6am, you could hear the big snowplows as they scraped the roads outside your house. They made a deep, rumbling sound as they passed.

When I was 14 years old, I learned to drive a tractor, which had a plow in front. My father asked me to plow the parking lot of his business, which I did. It was fun, especially for a young boy. The tractor—a Farmall Cub—had a little canopy I sat within, so I was protected from the elements. I plowed back and forth until the parking lot was clear of deep snow, so that the customers could park their cars.

It often snowed on Christmas Eve when I was younger; and the falling snow added to the Christmas atmosphere. My dad started a fire in the fireplace and put Christmas carols on the stereo. It could not have been more Christmassy.

The snow stayed with us through the New Year, which was fine. It was all part of the holiday season and we reveled in it. Since there was no school, we kids went outside to build snow forts and had snowball fights.

However, by January's end, we no longer went out to play in the snow. We had school and homework and other things to do. We were getting tired of winter and its snow.

By March we were sick of snow, of slush, of trying to walk through sloppy brown melting water in the streets. We yearned for spring; for warm, sunny days. We were weary of kicking the chunks of frozen slush out of the wheel wells of our cars. We were tired of all the sloppiness that foretells the end of winter.

However, it wasn't long before little crocuses began pushing themselves up through the snow, and we knew that spring was, at last, on the way.

And yet, to this day, the first snowfall remains a special, magical event for me. And April's happy words, "Oh look! It's snowing!" still ring fresh and clear.

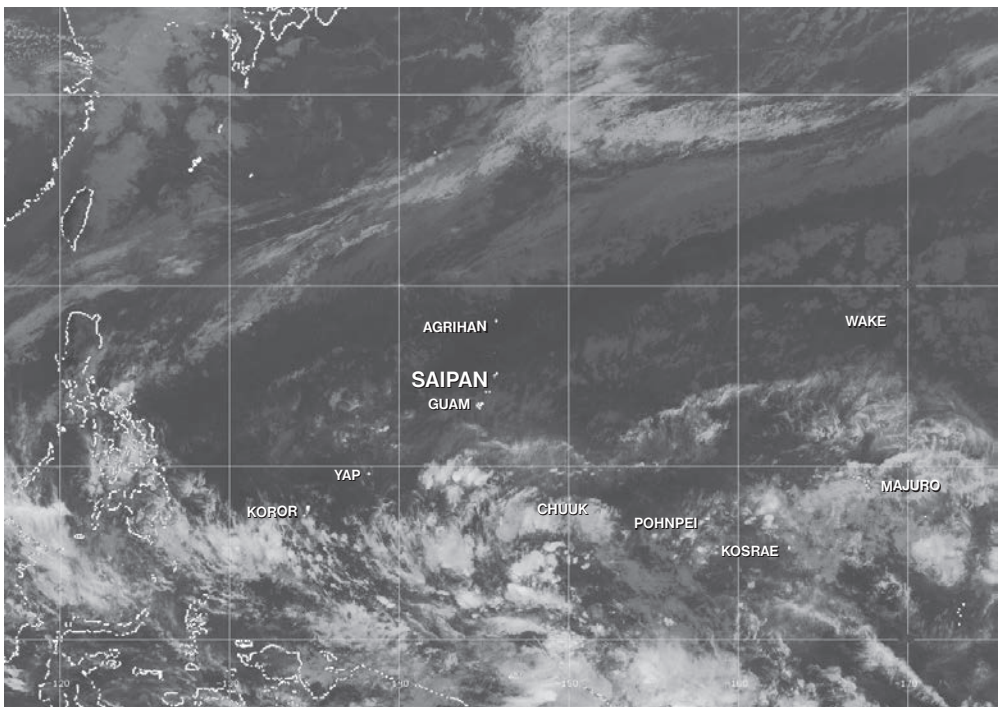
Russ Mason
As Teo, Saipan

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 25 mph.	Mostly cloudy with isolated showers. Breezy during the day. East winds 15 to 25 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲88° ▼79°	▲88° ▼79°	▲89° ▼79°	▲89° ▼79°	▲89° ▼79°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 8:26 AM, MONDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2016

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Andersen Air Force Base Doppler weather radar shows almost no showers within the Marianas waters. The VAD wind profile reveals east-northeast trade winds of 8 to 12 knots just off the surface which then increase to between 24 and 32 knots through the lowest 8 thousand feet of the air.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA		▼ ▲
Guam and Rota	Thunderstorms	79 / 88 °F
Palau	Mostly cloudy	80 / 85 °F
Yap	Afternoon clouds	80 / 86 °F
Chuuk	Heavy rain	79 / 82 °F
Pohnpei	Strong thunderstorms	80 / 84 °F
Kosrae	Afternoon clouds	82 / 86 °F
Majuro	Morning clouds	82 / 85 °F

AROUND THE GLOBE		▼ ▲
Auckland	Sunny	56 / 71 °F
Beijing	High level clouds	24 / 46 °F
Hong Kong	Partly cloudy	67 / 74 °F
Honolulu	Morning clouds	74 / 81 °F
London	Afternoon clouds	37 / 43 °F
Los Angeles	Mostly sunny	44 / 73 °F
Manila	Morning clouds	76 / 85 °F
Melbourne	Morning clouds	55 / 66 °F
Miami	Partly sunny	74 / 80 °F
New York	Mostly sunny	24 / 37 °F
Osaka	Partly sunny	42 / 55 °F
Paris	Partly sunny	33 / 42 °F
Pusan	Morning clouds	53 / 60 °F
Rome	Mostly cloudy	50 / 57 °F
Salem	Cloudy	37 / 50 °F
San Francisco	Mostly sunny	41 / 56 °F
Seoul	High level clouds	32 / 53 °F
Tokyo	Mostly sunny	43 / 58 °F
Washington, DC	Mostly sunny	25 / 39 °F

NMI CRIME STOPPERS

Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:
- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any IT&E cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.net

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		
6:16 AM	LOW TIDE	0.12 Feet
1:16 PM	HIGH TIDE	1.9 Feet
7:45 PM	LOW TIDE	0.87 Feet
-	-	-

	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Tuesday	6:38 AM	5:51 PM
Wednesday	6:38 AM	5:52 PM
Thursday	6:39 AM	5:52 PM
Friday	6:39 AM	5:53 PM
Saturday	6:40 AM	5:53 PM

	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Tuesday	-	11:41 AM	11:53 PM
Wednesday	-	12:21 PM	-
Thursday	12:42 AM	1:00 PM	-
Friday	1:29 AM	1:38 PM	-
Saturday	2:16 AM	2:17 PM	-

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 5, 2016

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA6394	4:15am	5:05am	Daily
UA6392	8:40am	9:30am	Daily
UA6391	1:30pm	3:10pm	1, 4, 5, 7 via Rota
UA6390	2:20pm	3:10pm	2, 3, 6
UA6398	6:05pm	6:55pm	Daily
UA6396	9:50pm	10:40pm	Daily

SAIPAN-ROTA (ROP)

UA6391	1:30pm	2:05pm	1, 4, 5, 7

ROTA (ROP)-GUAM (GUM)

UA6391	2:35pm	3:10pm	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)

DL297	4:20pm	7:00pm	Daily

SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)

OZ626	2:20am	6:00am	1
OZ626	2:50am	6:30am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
7C3403	4:45am	8:30am	Daily
LJ652	2:10pm	6:05pm	Daily
7C3401	4:00pm	7:45pm	Daily

SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)

OZ608	3:10am	6:20am	4, 7

SAIPAN-SHANGHAI (PVG)

3U8648	6:10am	8:40am	1, 4, 5, 7

SAIPAN-BEIJING (PEK)

MU764	1:30am	6:35am	3, 5, 7

SAIPAN-GUANGZHOU (CAN)

3U8646	4:20am	7:30am	2, 6

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/701	2:20am	11:05am	1 via ICN
OZ626/701	2:50am	11:05am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UA6394/191	4:15am	8:55am	2, 3, 6, 7 via GUM
UA6394/PR111	4:15am	9:15am	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via GUM
PR1572	5:45am	7:45am	7, 4
UA6391/183	1:30pm	8:50pm	5 via Rota-GUM
UA6391/183	1:30pm	9:10pm	1, 4, 7 via Rota-GUM
UA6391/193	1:30pm	10:35pm	5 via Rota-GUM-ROR
UA6390/183	2:20pm	8:50pm	2 via GUM
UA6390/183	2:20pm	9:10pm	3, 6 via GUM
UA6390/193	2:20pm	10:35pm	2 via GUM-ROR

SAIPAN-HONG KONG (HKG)

HX077	2:00am	5:00am	1, 4
OZ626/721	2:20am	11:50am	1 via ICN
OZ626/721	2:50am	11:50am	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via ICN
UA6391/159	1:30pm	9:55pm	1, 5 via Rota-GUM
UA6390/159	2:20pm	9:55pm	3, 6 via GUM

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA6393	2:45am	3:35am	Daily
UA6395	7:15am	8:05am	Daily
UA6391	12:10pm	1:00pm	1, 4, 5, 7
UA6390	12:10pm	1:50pm	2, 3, 6 via Rota
UA6397	4:45pm	5:35pm	Daily
UA6399	8:30pm	9:20pm	Daily

GUAM (GUM)-ROTA (ROP)

UA6390	12:10pm	12:45pm	2, 3, 6

ROTA (ROP)-SAIPAN

UA6390	1:15pm	1:50pm	2, 3, 6

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

DL298	10:30am	3:05pm	Daily

SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN

LJ651	7:30am	1:10pm	Daily
7C3402	9:30am	3:00pm	Daily
OZ625	7:40pm	1:10am+1	7
OZ625	8:15pm	1:45am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
7C3404	10:10pm	3:40am+1	Daily

BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN

OZ607	9:05pm	1:55am+1	3, 6

SHANGHAI (PVG)-SAIPAN

3U8647	10:40pm	5:00am+1	3, 4, 6, 7

BEIJING (PEK)-SAIPAN

MU763	4:40pm	12:30am+1	2, 4, 6

GUANGZHOU (CAN)-SAIPAN

3U8645	7:40pm	3:00am+1	1, 5

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA190/6397	9:55am	5:35pm	2, 3, 6, 7 via GUM
OZ702/625	12:15pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ702/625	12:15pm	1:45am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
PR1571	10:25pm	4:45am+1	3, 6
UA192/6395	9:45pm	8:05am+1	2, 5 via ROR-GUM
PR110/UA6395	10:05pm	8:05am+1	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/6395	10:25pm	8:05am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7 via GUM
UA184/6395	11:30pm	8:05am+1	2, 5 via GUM

HONG KONG (HKG)-SAIPAN

OZ722/625	1:10pm	1:10am+1	7 via ICN
OZ722/625	1:10pm	1:45am+1	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 via ICN
HX076	5:30pm	12:30am+1	3, 7
UA116/6395	9:55pm	8:05am+1	1, 3, 5, 6 via GUM

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); 3U: Sichuan Airlines; MU: China Eastern; UA: United Airlines; DL: Delta Airlines; OZ: Asiana; 7C: Jeju Air; HX: Hong Kong Airlines; LJ: Jin Air; ETD: Estimated Time of Departure;ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
6:30AM	6:45AM	Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
7:30AM	7:45AM	Daily
8:30AM	8:45AM	Daily
9:30AM	9:45AM	Daily
10:30AM	10:45AM	Daily
11:30AM	11:45AM	Daily
12:30NN	12:45NN	Daily
1:30PM	1:45PM	Daily
2:30PM	2:45PM	Daily
3:30PM	3:45PM	Daily
4:30PM	4:45PM	Daily
5:30PM	5:45PM	Daily
6:30PM	6:45PM	Daily
6:30PM	6:45PM	Daily

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
7:00AM	7:15AM	Daily
8:00AM	8:15AM	Daily
9:00AM	9:15AM	Daily
10:00AM	10:15AM	Daily
11:00AM	11:15AM	Daily
12:00NN	12:15NN	Daily
1:00PM	1:15PM	Daily
2:00PM	2:15PM	Daily
3:00PM	3:15PM	Daily
4:00PM	4:15PM	Daily
5:00PM	5:15PM	Daily
6:00PM	6:15PM	Daily

SAIPAN TO ROTA

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
7:45AM	8:15AM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
4:00PM	4:30PM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat

ROTA TO SAIPAN

DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
8:30AM	9:00AM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat
4:45PM	5:15PM	Mon, Tues,Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat

Paskong Pinoy 2016

United Filipino Organization members pose for a group photo during the annual celebration of the *Paskong Pinoy* held in Susupe on Dec. 18.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

United Filipino Organization members gather around for a group photo during the annual celebration of the *Paskong Pinoy* held in Susupe on Dec. 18.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

United Filipino Organization members pose for a group photo during the annual celebration of *Paskong Pinoy* in Susupe on Dec. 18.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

United Filipino Organization members, along with outgoing president Romero Malasarte, center, pose for a group photo during the annual celebration of *Paskong Pinoy* in Susupe on Dec. 18.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Several members of the United Filipino Organization pose for a group photo during the annual celebration of *Paskong Pinoy* in Susupe on Dec. 18.
MICHAEL T. SANTOS

Groups of people gather around a vendor to get some juice during the annual celebration of *Paskong Pinoy* held in Susupe on Dec. 18.
MICHAEL T. SANTOS

Members of the community gather to watch the performances during the annual celebration of *Paskong Pinoy* in Susupe on Dec. 18.
MICHAEL T. SANTOS

A child sings during the annual celebration of the *Paskong Pinoy* in Susupe on Dec. 18.
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Saipan Music and Dance children perform a dance number during the annual celebration of *Paskong Pinoy* held in Susupe on Dec. 18.
MICHAEL T. SANTOS

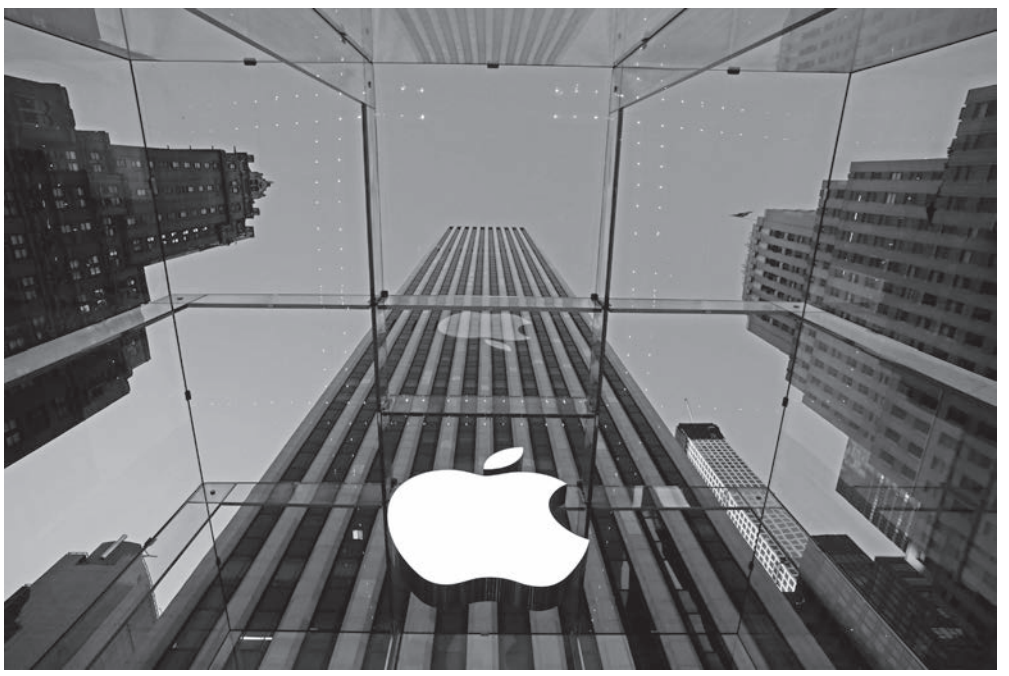
Business

Ireland to appeal EU's record $14B tax order on Apple

DUBLIN (AP)—Ireland will appeal the European Union's landmark order to collect a record 13 billion euros ($14 billion) in taxes from Apple, the Irish Department of Finance announced Monday.

The Irish countermove comes nearly four months after EU competition authorities hit Apple with the back-tax bill based on its longtime reporting of European-wide profits through Ireland, which charges the American company only for sales on its own territory at Europe-low rates that in turn have been greatly reduced by the use of shell companies at home and abroad.

In its formal legal summary , the Department of Finance declares that is the whole point of Ireland's sales pitch to foreign investors—and asserts it is perfectly legal to levy far less tax on profits than imposed by competitors. It accuses EU competition authorities of unfairness, exceeding their competence and authority, and seeking to breach Ireland's sovereignty in national tax affairs.



AP

In this Sept. 5, 2014, file photo, the Apple logo hangs in the glass box entrance to the company's Fifth Avenue store in New York.

The ruling unveiled Aug. 30 by EU Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager called on Apple to pay Ireland the 13 billion euros for gross underpayment of tax on profits across the European bloc from 2003 to 2014. Her report concluded that Cupertino, California-based Apple used two shell companies incorporated in Ireland to permit Apple to report its Europe-wide profits at effective rates well under 1 percent.

The EU judgment could have been even huger, because EU time limits meant the judgment could include potential tax infringements dating only from 2003, not all the way back to Apple's original 1991 tax deal with Ireland. Still, Irish specialists in corporate tax estimate that the EU's order, if enforced, actually would total 19 billion euros ($20 billion) because of compounding interest from delayed payment.

The centerpiece of Ireland's argument is that Vestager should have confined herself to policing illegal state aid that gives an unfair advantage to a particular company, whereas the EU has launched an assault on a policy that Ireland has offered to all foreign companies locating on its soil.

The benefits are obvious in Ireland, which has the fastest-growing economy in Europe driven by the exports of about 1,000 multinationals that employ 5 percent of the workforce and generate nearly a quarter of economic output. Apple today is the biggest private employer in the Irish Republic's second-largest city, Cork, with a workforce exceeding 5,500. Economists estimate Apple's Cork operation pumps around 16 billion euros ($17 billion) annually in salaries, tax and investment into the Irish economy.

"The purpose of the state aid rules is to tackle state interventions which confer a selective advantage. The state aid rules by their nature cannot remedy mismatches between tax systems on a global level," the Department of Finance brief argued as it contested the EU's contention that Apple got benefits denied to other companies based here.

The Irish reply sets the stage for a titanic legal battle from Brussels to California and beyond that has implications for more than 600 U.S. multinationals based in Ireland and thousands more using tax-avoidance vehicles globally. Apple Inc. chief executive Tim Cook already has denounced the EU judgment, disputes its calculations, and says the company will pursue its own legal challenges expected to last years.

Ireland, an EU member since 1973, for decades has charged a headline rate on corporate taxes of 12.5 percent -less than half the European norm and nearly a third the U.S. rate of 35 percent—and has facilitated the complex use of shell companies that help Apple and scores of other high-tech global enterprises, including social media and pharmaceutical leaders, to pay far less on non-U.S. sales of goods and services.

Corpus Christi lifts water ban after tests find no corrosive

HOUSTON (AP)—A nearly four-day ban on drinking the water in Corpus Christi, Texas, was lifted on Sunday after test results showed no contamination due to a chemical leak, the city's mayor announced.

Mayor Dan McQueen said residents could resume using the city's water supply for drinking, bathing and cooking.

"It is all full use but we are going to continue to monitor as we go on," McQueen said.

None of the 28 drinking water samples the Environmental Protection Agency reviewed tested positive for Indulin AA-86, an asphalt-emulsifying agent that's corrosive, the federal agency said Sunday in a statement. Indulin can burn the eyes, skin and respiratory tract if a person comes into contact with concentrated amounts.

The water ban had been issued late Wednesday out of concern that a chemical leak at an asphalt plant leased to Ergon Asphalt and Emulsions by oil refiner Valero could have contaminated the city's water supply.

The EPA said there have been seven "unconfirmed" reports of symptoms possibly related to prohibited water use. The federal agency, along with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, will continue collecting and testing water samples over the next few days.

McQueen said officials will continue investigating the leak at the asphalt plant and seek possible damages from those responsible.

EPA spokesman David Gray said Saturday night the federal agency would begin an in-depth investigation of the leak "and take appropriate action" as soon as it finished with the water testing.

On Saturday, city officials had said that there had been three reports of dirty water before the ban had been issued.

There has been some confusion over when city officials were notified of the serious water problems at the plant site that ultimately led to the water ban.

There had been two reports earlier this month of dirty water at the plant site that resulted in city workers flushing out pipes. City officials have said such dirty-water reports are common.

Senator: Exploding e-cigarette recalls need to be considered

NEW YORK (AP)—U.S. Sen. Charles Schumer is increasing the heat on the federal government to consider recalling e-cigarette batteries and devices that explode and catch fire, injuring users.

Schumer, a New York Democrat, has called e-cigarettes "ticking time bombs" and said they continue to cause injuries including severe burns.

At a press conference Sunday, Schumer cited a recent Associated Press story saying the FDA identified about 66 explosions in 2015 and early 2016 after recording 92 explosions from 2009 to September 2015.

He said he wants the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to figure out why so many devices, many from China, are exploding. He said the recent injuries are proof federal action is needed.

"Where there's smoke, there's fire and that seems to be the case—again and again—for many popular e-cigarettes that have injured dozens of people," Schumer said. "With any other product, serious action would have been taken and e-cigarettes should be no exception. Despite the explosions, no recalls have been issued. It's radio silence from both the industry and the feds, so that's why I'm sounding the alarm."

E-cigarette user Katrina Williams, a New York freight manager, said she wanted a safer alternative to smoking regular tobacco cigarettes and thought e-cigarettes were the answer—until one exploded in her pocket in April as she drove home from a beauty salon.

"It was like a firecracker," she said, as it seared third-degree burns in her leg, blasted through her charred pants and stuck in the dashboard.

As the use of e-cigarettes has increased over the past year, similar painful accidents have been recorded with greater frequency, with faulty lithium-ion batteries seen as the likely culprits. The same types of batteries are used safely in many consumer electronics, but they've been behind fires in hover boards and smartphones.

The AP story said the numbers kept by the FDA may be an undercount. Just one hospital, the UW Medicine Regional Burn Center at Harborview Medical Center in Seattle, said it has seen more than 20 patients with e-cigarette burns since it started tracking them informally in October 2015.

The industry maintains e-cigarettes are safe when used properly. The Tobacco Vapor Electronic Cigarette Association encourages proper recharging of the batteries as a way to prevent possible injuries.

The FDA has said it's reviewing e-cigarettes and will evaluate their batteries, including "amperage, voltage, wattage, battery type" and other issues.

Hydroelectric engineers find potential in centuries-old mine

MINEVILLE, N.Y. (AP)—Some look at an abandoned, centuries-old iron mine in New York's Adirondacks and see a relic.

An ambitious group of engineers sees the shafts in Mineville as a new way to provide a steady flow of electricity in a growing market for renewable energy.

They are pitching a plan to circulate some of the millions of gallons of groundwater that have flooded the mine shafts over the years to power an array of 100 hydroelectric turbines a half-mile underground.

They envision the operation as a solution for solar and wind power producers, who need ways to ensure an uninterrupted flow of energy when the sun isn't shining and winds are still.

"Today, everyone's recognizing that a critical part of our energy infrastructure is going to be storage," said Jim Besha, head of Albany Engineering Corp., as he gave officials a tour of the mine site about 100 miles north of Albany. "You can think of it as a bank. If someone has excess solar energy, they would pay a fee to store it overnight."

While logistically complex, the plan is at the same time incredibly simple: Engineers would drain roughly half of the water from the shafts and pump the remainder into an upper chamber. The water would then be released into a lower chamber, powering turbines and creating electricity. The turbines would be reversed to pump the water back up to repeat the process.

Technically, the pumped water is considered stored energy, to be released strategically when power is needed.

The Mineville Pumped Storage Project still faces federal approvals and up to three years of construction, but it could become one of the first projects of its kind in the nation.

It also would mark a 21st century re-use of a mine that famously contributed iron for the first naval battle of the Revolutionary War on nearby Lake Champlain and was mined for the last time in 1971.

Nation

Trump aides ask of Russian meddling: Does it matter?

WASHINGTON (AP)—Donald Trump's top aides on Sunday said the president-elect isn't ready to accept the finding by intelligence officials that Moscow hacked Democratic emails in a bid to elevate Trump. Even if it's true, they said, Trump still won the White House fair and square.

The pushback came a day before members of the Electoral College are scheduled to formally cast votes for Trump as the 45th president. While Democrats likely are powerless to stop it, they suggested Trump's victory over Democrat Hillary Clinton would forever be tainted by Russian meddling.

Republican electors have been inundated by Trump opponents urging them to defy the results in their states and vote against Trump.

"This whole thing is a spin job," said Trump's incoming chief of staff, Reince Priebus. "And I think what the Democrats ought to do is look in the mirror and face the reality that they lost the election."

Trump himself weighed in Sunday evening, tweeting, "If my many supporters acted and threatened people like those who lost the election are doing, they would be scorned & called terrible names!"

The partisan swipes mostly ignored warnings by foreign policy experts that part of Russia's calculation also was likely payback for years of U.S. criticism of its own elections and a desire to portray America as a flawed champion of democracy - potentially weakening U.S. power on the world stage. Russia has vehemently denied the accusation.

Many lawmakers, including some leading Republicans, say voters may not have been swayed by the release of tens of thousands of private emails. But the fact that a foreign power tried to intervene in U.S. democracy and exploit divisions in American politics is cause for alarm, they say.

Still, Trump's transition team and loyalists on Capitol Hill weren't buying it, at least not on the eve of the Electoral College vote.

"Where's the evidence?" asked Kellyanne Conway, another close Trump adviser.

Asked about President Barack Obama's vow to retaliate against the Russians, Conway said: "It seems like the president is under pressure from Team Hillary, who can't accept the election results."

Democrats say it's unlikely the public will ever hear detailed evidence because doing so would disclose classified sources and methods. But with last week's declaration by CIA Director John Brennan that there was "strong consensus" that Russia hacked Democrats to try to sway the election, lawmakers are stepping up demands for closed-door briefings and a separate congressional investigation.

California Rep. Adam Schiff, the senior Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said an unclassified intelligence review could be released within the next two weeks or three weeks.

As president-elect, Trump would have access to high-level intelligence on the matter, although it's unclear what he's been told. Trump has previously called the intelligence finding of Russian involvement "ridiculous." On Sunday, Conway said she wasn't privy to the same intelligence briefings as the president-elect and couldn't say what he knows.

Donna Brazile, interim head of the Democratic National Committee, said the DNC was no match for a sophisticated foreign power in cyberspace that "weaponized" private emails to "sow misinformation and to sow discord" between Clinton and her primary rival, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders.

AP

In this Monday, Sept. 28, 2015 file photo, U.S. President Barack Obama, right, and Russia's President President Vladimir Putin pose for members of the media before a bilateral meeting at the United Nations headquarters.

Trump Cabinet excites his voters: 'We have to trust him'

By CARLA K. JOHNSON
ASSOCIATED PRESS

As each Cabinet announcement draws fresh criticism of the wealth, connections or opinions of Donald Trump's latest appointees, many Americans who voted for him say the president-elect is doing what he promised to do: draining the swamp.

And they're excited.

To them, the idea of a defense secretary nicknamed "Mad Dog" is bliss. They rejoice in an energy secretary who once said he would eliminate the Department of Energy. And while some Trump supporters balk at ExxonMobil CEO Rex Tillerson's close ties with Russia's Vladimir Putin, they say they will trust Trump's judgment about his secretary of state nominee.

These voters, who often echo Trump's own campaign statements, say the affluence of his Cabinet picks is an advantage, not a liability.

"The guys he's putting in there, they don't need to do this. They're independently wealthy," said Trump voter Roger Mansfield, 67, a small business owner in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. "They don't need any more money. The motivation is to make pragmatic, rational business decisions. What could be wrong about that?"

The Associated Press interviewed Trump voters about his Cabinet picks and other postelection revelations, such as a CIA assessment that Russia interfered in the November election on Trump's behalf. Top Republicans in Congress have endorsed investigations into the Russian meddling, but the idea drew jeers from Shay Chamberlain, 37, of Menomonie, Wisconsin.

"That's kind of ridiculous," Chamberlain said. "I tried to influence the elections, you know what I mean? I mean, we all did when we went on Facebook and put silly memes on there and tried to influence our friends to go one way or another."

Some Cabinet choices have been called into question for their lack of experience, their extraordinary wealth and their past relationships with the departments they are to lead. Much of the criticism has come from Democrats, but experts, past government officials and some Republicans have also raised doubts.

John Barnes, a 60-year-old Air Force retiree living in Albuquerque, said he liked that Trump was "hiring outsiders and not local yokel knuckleheads."

Flood-stricken historic town mulls federal buyouts again

PRINCEVILLE, N.C. (AP)—When Dianne Hines pulls up to her flood-damaged home in Princeville, she has no interest in going inside.

Her ruined furniture, books, pictures and other belongings lie stacked at the curb, left there by volunteers with Samaritan's Purse. They've placed family photos that might be saved on the porch. Glassware, a girl's pink-and-blue bicycle and a walker sit outside.

Hines doesn't even go on the porch; she doesn't want to live there again.

The small, one-story house was built on the same spot as her previous home after Hurricane Floyd knocked the old structure off its foundation in 1999. Now that Hurricane Matthew has made her rebuilt home unlivable, the 63-year-old domestic worker is ready to move away from Princeville altogether.

"I feel like it's time to make a change," she said.

That decision, however, doesn't entirely rest with her, or with hundreds of other Princeville residents who might consider moving after the October storm.

Instead, under Federal Emergency Management Agency rules, the four-person town council will vote soon on which of three options to offer homeowners: elevate homes, repair damaged homes or let FEMA acquire the homes of people who want out. FEMA would demolish those homes and turn the land into green space that can never be built on again.

And there's the rub for a small town with an annual budget of less than $1 million: Princeville would be devastated, if not lost entirely. Green space is untaxable property, which hurts Princeville's bottom line, and the town will have to maintain that property, too.

"Our tax base is already small, and if we allow people to leave and they will never be able to come back to that property, then we'll never be able to bring more citizens in," Mayor Bobbie Jones said at a meeting in early December where locals learned about the options.

A state Division of Emergency Management spokeswoman says she's unaware of any other governments wrestling with the decision.

There are approximately 750 single-family homes in Princeville, a town of about 2,200 on North Carolina's coastal plain.

Town manager Daniel Gerald said 241 homes had major damage and 229 others had less severe damage.

Settled at the end of the Civil War by freed slaves—the first town in the U.S. incorporated by African-Americans—Princeville is still almost entirely black and has a per-capita income less than half the national average. The entire town is in a flood plain, and has repeatedly flooded over the years, according to the Army Corps of Engineers.

ACROSS THE NATION

Boy, 3, out shopping with grandma dies in road rage shooting

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (AP)—A 3-year-old boy being taken on a shopping trip by his grandmother was killed in a road rage shooting when a driver opened fire on the grandmother's car because he thought she "wasn't moving fast enough at a stop sign," police said. The boy and his grandmother were at the stop sign in southwest Little Rock on Saturday evening when a driver apparently angry about the delay stepped out of his car and opened fire, police said. The boy was struck by gunfire at least once, they said. The grandmother, who wasn't struck, drove away and called police from a shopping center. Police arrived at the shopping center and found the boy in the car outside a JCPenney department store. The boy was taken to a hospital, where he died shortly after, becoming the second young child shot dead in a road rage incident in the city in the last few weeks.

Bitter cold front moves across Plains to Midwest, heads east

CHICAGO (AP)—Dangerous, record-low temperatures caused cancellations of some holiday festivities in the Plains and Midwest over the weekend before the cold front pushed into the Ohio Valley and the Eastern Seaboard on Sunday. The National Weather Service forecast a warming trend to start early in the week in many spots as a quieter weather pattern was expected to develop. On Sunday, temperatures plunged to minus 20 degrees and lower across much of the northern Plains with a fresh surge of bitter arctic air reaching into the Midwest. A church in Lincoln, Nebraska, canceled its living nativity scene. Patti Crittenden, Trinity United Methodist Church's director of youth ministries, told the Lincoln Journal Star, "In my opinion, this is too cold for anyone to be standing outside—bundled up or not."

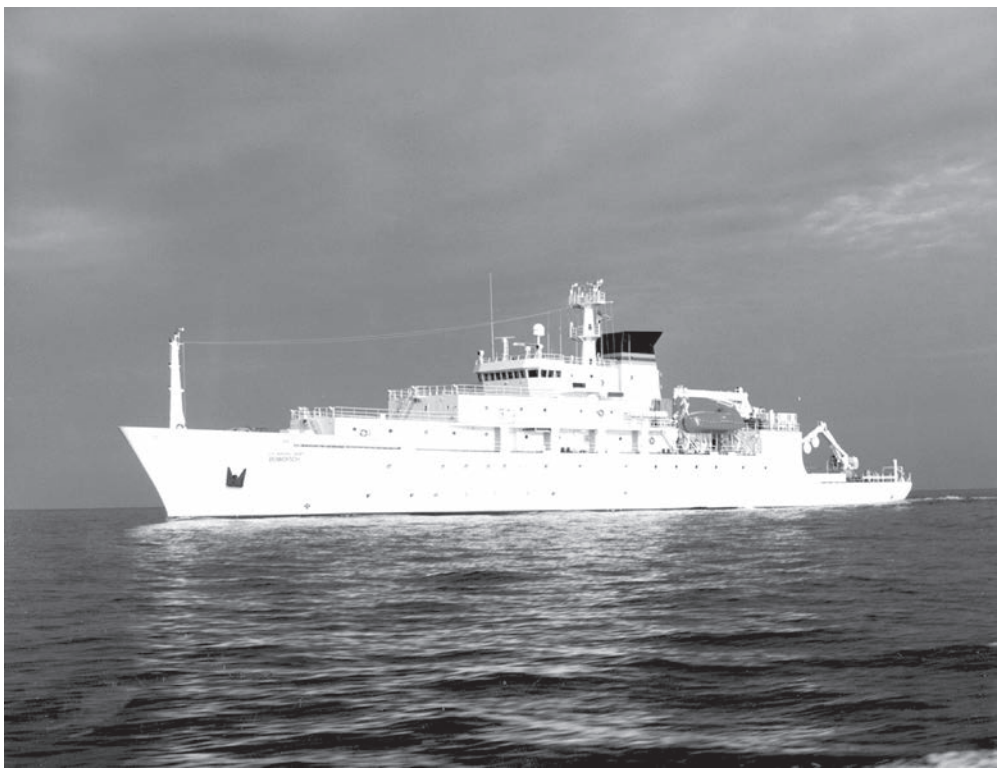
Asia

China says it will give drone back, but Trump says 'keep it'

BEIJING (AP)—China says its military seized a U.S. Navy unmanned underwater glider in the South China Sea, but that it will give it back. President-elect Donald Trump, however, says the Chinese government should be told "we don't want the drone they stole back" and "let them keep it!"

This comes after U.S. officials confirmed that they "secured an understanding" for the return of the device. Trump's tweet Saturday evening may extend one of the most serious incidents between the American and the Chinese militaries in years.

The Chinese navy on Thursday seized the drone, which the Pentagon said was being operated by civilian contractors to conduct oceanic research. The U.S. lodged a formal diplomatic complaint and demanded the drone back.



AP

In this undated photo released by the U.S. Navy Visual News Service, the USNS Bowditch, a T-AGS 60 Class Oceanographic Survey Ship, sails in open water.

Chinese Defense Ministry spokesman Yang Yujun issued a statement late Saturday saying that a Chinese navy lifeboat discovered an unknown device in the South China Sea on Thursday.

"In order to prevent this device from posing a danger to the safe navigation of passing ships and personnel, the Chinese lifeboat adopted a professional and responsible attitude in investigating and verifying the device," Yang said.

The statement said that after confirming that the device was an American unmanned submerged device, "China decided to transfer it to the U.S. through appropriate means."

The U.S. said that "through direct engagement with Chinese authorities, we have secured an understanding that the Chinese will return" the unmanned underwater vehicle, according to a statement from Peter Cook, spokesman for U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter.

But Trump, after holding a rally to thank supporters for his election, took to Twitter to criticize the deal. "We should tell China that we don't want the drone they stole back.- let them keep it!" the president-elect tweeted Saturday evening.

Earlier in the day, he had blasted the seizure.

Misspelling "unprecedented," he tweeted: "China steals United States Navy research drone in international waters—rips it out of water and takes it to China in unpresidented act." He later reissued the tweet, correcting the spelling.

The U.S. said China's "unlawful seizure" came in international waters. Yet China pointedly accused the U.S. of long sending ships "in China's presence" to conduct "military surveying."

"China is resolutely opposed to this and requests the U.S. stop such activities," Yang, the Defense Ministry spokesman, said in the statement. "China will continue to maintain vigilance against the relevant U.S. activities and will take necessary measures to deal with them."

Earlier Saturday, China's Foreign Ministry said the nation's military was in contact with its American counterparts on "appropriately handling" the incident, though it offered no details on what discussions were underway.

Sen. John McCain, an Arizona Republican who is chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union" that the seizure of the drone was a "gross violation of international law."

The drone was seized while collecting unclassified scientific data about 92 kilometers (57 miles) northwest of Subic Bay near the Philippines in the South China Sea, which China claims virtually in its entirety, Navy Capt. Jeff Davis, a Pentagon spokesman, said Friday.

"It is ours. It's clearly marked as ours. We would like it back, and we would like this not to happen again," Davis told reporters. He said the drone costs about $150,000 and is largely commercial, off-the-shelf technology.

The USNS Bowditch, which is not a combat ship, was stopped in international waters Thursday afternoon and recovering two of the gliders when the Chinese ship approached, Davis said. The two vessels were within some 450 meters (500 yards) of each other. He said the USNS Bowditch carries some small arms, but that no shots were fired.

S. Korea begins trial of confidante of disgraced president

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—On the first day of her trial, the jailed confidante of disgraced South Korean President Park Geun-hye on Monday denied using her presidential ties to extort money from powerful companies. It was the first public appearance in weeks for the woman at the heart of a scandal that led to Park's impeachment.

Choi Soon-sil, Park's friend of 40 years, wore black glasses and bowed deeply to the three judges before her lawyer, Lee Kyoung-jae, denied that Choi conspired with an ex-presidential adviser to pressure companies to donate money to foundations controlled by Choi.

The hearing at the Seoul Central District Court will review the charges against Choi, who prosecutors say manipulated state affairs and extorted businesses. It will also set the trial schedule. Ten others swept up in the scandal also face trial.

Choi is also known as Choi Seo-won, which is how she was referred to in court.

It is South Korea's biggest trial since the 2014 court appearance of the crew of a ferry that sank and killed more than 300 people, mostly teenagers.

Choi last appeared in public on Oct. 31, when, after losing a Prada shoe in a crush of media and protesters, she told reporters at the Seoul prosecutors' office that she had "committed a sin that deserves death."

It's not clear how long the trial will last. Courts normally issue a verdict within six months of an indictment, so she'll likely get a verdict by May if prosecutors don't bring new charges.

Choi is charged with abuse of power, extortion and attempted fraud. If convicted on all charges, she could receive up to 15 years in prison, according to court spokesman Shin Jae-hwan.

Before her arrest, Choi said she that received some of Park's speeches in advance but that she didn't know if they included confidential information. She denied the other allegations.

Indonesia military transport plane crashes in Papua; 13 dead

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP)—An Indonesian military transport plane crashed in bad weather Sunday in the country's easternmost province of Papua, killing all 13 people on board, officials said.

The Hercules C-130 plane was carrying 12 tons of food supplies and cement from Timika to Wamena, a distance of about 200 kilometers (125 miles), when it crashed just minutes before its scheduled landing, said air force chief of staff Agus Supriatna.

The plane was carrying three pilots and 10 other personnel.

Bad weather and low clouds in Wamena, the capital of the mountainous district of Jayawijaya, were believed to be factors in the crash, deputy air force chief of staff Hadiyan Sumintaatmadja told a news conference.

"The tower in Wamena spotted the plane, but it was not certain that the plane saw the runway," he said. He did not rule out that the plane hit a mountain.

An investigation was underway. Sumintaatmadja said the aircraft, purchased from Australia, where it was first used in the 1980s, had more than 60 hours left until its next routine maintenance.

The plane took off from Timika at 5:35 a.m. and crashed about four minutes before it was scheduled to land in Wamena. TV footage showed rescuers and locals at the wreckage site, where they had recovered all the victims.

It was the third serious air accident in Indonesia in less than a month. On Nov. 24, a Bell 412 EP helicopter from the Indonesian army crashed in Indonesia's part of Borneo island, killing three people. A week later, a police plane with 13 people aboard crashed into the sea on the way to the island of Batam, near Singapore.

Indonesia, a sprawling archipelago of more than 250 million people, has been plagued by transportation accidents in recent years, from plane and train crashes to ferry sinkings. The military, which suffers from low funding, has also regularly suffered airplane and helicopter crashes.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Amnesty warns Myanmar over treatment of Rohingya

BANGKOK (AP)—Amnesty International has warned Myanmar that the actions of its military may constitute crimes against humanity, based on accounts of violence against the country's Muslim Rohingya minority. Myanmar has come under heavy criticism for its army's forceful treatment of the Rohingya. International human rights groups accuse the military of mass murder, looting and rape. The military sweeps were sparked by an Oct. 9 attack on police outposts in Rakhine state that killed nine officers. Though Amnesty says the scope of violence is unclear, they are voicing concern over the indiscriminate targeting of Rohingya civilians. Amnesty's report follows increasing concerns that state repression is radicalizing the Rohingya. Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi will brief fellow members of the Association of Southeast Asians Nations at a Monday meeting in Yangon.

18 people die in separate traffic accidents in Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—At least 18 people were killed and around 80 others wounded in two separate highway traffic accidents in western Afghanistan, provincial officials said on Sunday. Mohammad Naser Mehri, spokesman for the provincial governor in Farah province, said a bus hit a fuel tanker on the main highway, killing 14 people and wounding more than 40. The bus was on its way from western Herat toward the capital, Kabul, when the accident took place, Mehri said. "Around a dozen of the wounded are in critical condition," Mehri said.

Japan Emperor has a cold, cancels year-end banquet

TOKYO (AP)—Japan's Emperor has canceled an annual year-end palace banquet because of a cold. The Imperial Household Agency said Monday that Emperor Akihito had developed a fever last week and is still recovering. Akihito turns 83 years old on Friday. Plans for his birthday celebration have not been changed. Akihito had invited Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and other top officials for Monday's banquet. Akihito expressed an apparent wish to abdicate in a rare public address in August, citing concerns that his age and health conditions may start limiting his ability to fulfil official duties. A government-commissioned panel of experts is discussing a possibility of setting up a special law to accommodate his abdication, without touching more controversial issues, including a possibility of allowing a female emperor.

World

France, Russia reach compromise as Aleppo rescue uncertain

BEIRUT (AP)—France struck a compromise Sunday with Russia on a U.N. resolution that it said would prevent "mass atrocities" in besieged areas of Aleppo, where thousands of trapped civilians and rebel fighters await evacuation in freezing temperatures.

On the ground, prospects for swift evacuations from Aleppo and other besieged areas were thrown into doubt again Sunday after militants burned buses assigned to the rescue operation, although one convoy of five buses was reported to have reached safety from the city late Sunday.

The Aleppo evacuations were to have been part of a wider deal that would simultaneously allow more than 2,000 sick and wounded people to leave two pro-government villages that have been besieged by Syrian rebels. Most villagers are Shiite Muslims, while most rebels are Sunni Muslims.

Six buses that were among those poised to enter the villages of Foua and Kfarya on Sunday were set on fire by unidentified militants, presumably to scuttle any deal.

■■■

UNITED NATIONS (AP)—The U.N. Security Council is expected to vote on a resolution aimed at immediately deploying U.N. monitors to eastern Aleppo, a move France says will be critical to prevent "mass atrocities" by Syrian forces, and especially militias, who captured the rebel stronghold.

The resolution, due to be put to a vote on Monday, comes as thousands more trapped Aleppo civilians and rebels await evacuation in freezing temperatures in the rebel enclave.

The text calls for the United Nations and other institutions to monitor the evacuations and demands that U.N. chief Ban Ki-moon urgently consult all parties on the immediate deployment of the monitors.

France and Russia, who submitted rival draft resolutions, struck a compromise text after more than three hours of closed-door consultations by the U.N. Security Council on Sunday.

■■■

A video posted online showed armed men near the burning buses as celebratory gunshots rang out. "The buses that came to evacuate the apostates have been burned," the narrator of the video said.

AP

Syria's permanent representative to the United Nations, Bashar Jaafari, left, speaks to others on the floor of the U.N. Security Council chamber at United Nations headquarters Sunday, Dec. 18, 2016, before an anticipated vote on a resolution demanding immediate and unconditional access for the United Nations and its partners to besieged parts of Aleppo and throughout Syria to ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid.

He warned that no "Shiite pigs" would be allowed to leave the towns.

The video could not be verified independently, but was in line with Associated Press reporting from the area.

Earlier Sunday, pro-Syrian government TV stations showed dozens of buses on stand-by at a crossing near eastern Aleppo, reportedly poised to resume evacuations from the opposition's last foothold in the city.

Later, a Syrian opposition war monitoring group said the first civilians and fighters to evacuate eastern Aleppo in over 48 hours arrived safely in the countryside from the city. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said shortly before midnight Sunday that government forces allowed five buses to leave Aleppo.

Evacuations were suspended two days earlier amid mutual recriminations after several thousand people had been ferried out of the war zone. Thousands more desperate civilians are believed trapped in the city.

WORLD BRIEFS

Poland's president talks with opposition, protests spread

WARSAW, Poland (AP)—Police removed several protesters blocking a prominent Polish governing party member's car Sunday in a southern city as the president met in the capital with opposition leaders to help solve a growing political crisis. The demonstrators sat in a street in Krakow trying to prevent Law and Justice party member Ryszard Terlecki from entering Wawel Castle. He was joining party leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski, who was on a private visit to the tomb of his twin brother, the late President Lech Kaczynski. Police officers dragged the protesters away and ensured safe passage. Later, people chanted "Shame! Shame!" at the car that was carrying Kaczynski out of the castle. Political tension is rising between Poland's conservative government and the pro-European Union opposition over the ruling party's plan to restrict journalists' access to lawmakers in parliament. The wider conflict started building last year after the Law and Justice party took power and began introducing sweeping reforms.

Trump gave $10,000 for West Bank settlement, tax form shows

JERUSALEM (AP)—U.S. President-elect Donald Trump donated $10,000 for a Jewish settlement in the West Bank in 2003. According to a tax filing, the Donald J. Trump Foundation made the donation to a U.S. nonprofit group that raises funds for the Beit El settlement's seminary, a news organization affiliated with the settler movement and other activities in the settlement. Trump's pick for ambassador to Israel, lawyer David Friedman, is the nonprofit's president. Beit El founder Yaakov Katz revealed Trump's donation to Israeli settler radio Sunday. The U.S. considers West Bank settlements obstacles to peace. The Palestinians seek the territory, captured by Israel in 1967, for a state. But an adviser to Trump has said Trump does not see settlements as an impediment to peace. Trump's transition team had no immediate comment.

Gunmen kill 10, including Canadian, in attacks on police

KARAK, Jordan (AP)—Gunmen assaulted Jordanian police in a series of attacks Sunday, including at a Crusader castle popular with tourists, killing seven officers, two local civilians and a woman visiting from Canada, officials said. Several armed men were reported barricaded inside the castle after nightfall, hemmed in by special forces soldiers.

At least 34 people, including two foreign nationals, were wounded in the day's violence, which was one of the bloodiest attacks in Jordan in recent memory.

Security officials said in a statement late Sunday that at least four gunmen were killed and that troops continued to search the area. The statement said large amounts of weapons had been seized. It made no reference to local media reports that at one point, the attackers had held hostages.

The shootings were the latest in a series of attacks that have challenged this pro-Western kingdom's claim to be an oasis of calm in a region threatened by Islamic extremists.

The killing of the Canadian tourist could further hurt Jordan's embattled tourism sector, which has declined sharply since the Islamic State group seized large parts of neighboring Syria and Iraq two years ago.

Another Canadian was injured in the shooting, Canada's Global Affairs spokesman John Babcock said.

"Canadian officials in Amman are actively working with local authorities to gather additional information and are providing consular assistance to Canadians at this difficult time," he said.

The Canadian Embassy in Amman issued an alert warning urging Canadians to avoid travel to Karak, a town in central Jordan about 140 kilometers (87 miles) south of the capital.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attacks in and near Karak.

The chain of events began when a police patrol received reports of a house fire in the town of Qatraneh in the Karak district, said a statement by Jordan's Public Security Directorate. Officers responding to the call came under fire from inside the house, the statement said. Two policemen were wounded and the assailants fled in a car, it said.

In another attack, gunmen fired on a security patrol in Karak, causing no injuries, the statement said.

Recovering from war, Mozambican park again faces conflict

GORONGOSA NATIONAL PARK, Mozambique (AP)—A fragment of a bullet-pocked wall in this Mozambique wildlife reserve is a reminder of a civil war that ended in 1992. Today, an ambitious revival of Gorongosa National Park is underway, but trouble looms again from the conflict's old foes.

One of Africa's richest ecosystems, Gorongosa historically has been a stronghold of the country's main opposition group, whose rivalry with the ruling party has spiraled into ambushes, tit-for-tat assassinations and other attacks in the last few years.

The two sides have been negotiating, and a return to war is unlikely. But the Gorongosa Restoration Project, which is pushing ahead with a 2017 budget of more than $8 million, is treading a delicate line between adversaries. Some funds go to aid for poor communities in contested areas around the park.

As in other parts of Africa, a well-funded agenda is vulnerable to political unrest beyond its control.

"We really are neutral," said Greg Carr, an American philanthropist who leads the Gorongosa non-profit group and has telephone numbers for leaders of both factions. Many of the 500 people working for the wildlife park back Renamo, the opposition, and some support Frelimo, the ruling party, though managers discourage any sensitive talk on the job.

One recent morning, as insects trilled in the heat, rangers in uniform saluted Rui Branco, the park's head of law enforcement, before departing on a patrol to thwart poachers who kill animals for their meat.

"We've had opportunism. You get poachers trying to pretend they're someone, or one of the sides, and they hope they'll get let go because of that," Branco said. "In the beginning, it worked for them. The scouts would be afraid. And then we realized what was going on."

Government forces and Renamo fighters stay out of most of the unfenced park. The rival groups "know who we are, and they respect what we do," Branco said.

The civil war that started in 1977 killed up to 1 million people. Frelimo was a Marxist guerrilla movement when it took power, and Renamo rebels were backed by white-minority rulers in what was then Rhodesia, and in apartheid South Africa.

Focus

AP

In this file photo posted on the Twitter page of Syria's al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front on April 25, 2015, which is consistent with AP reporting, fighters pray after rebel fighters from Islamic factions - including the Nusra Front captured the town of Jisr al-Shughour from Syrian government forces, in Idlib province, Syria.

Idlib likely to be Syria's next bloody theater after Aleppo

BASSEM MROUE
ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIRUT (AP)—The battle for Aleppo has gripped the world, but it is hardly the only active front across war-torn Syria. One of the next targets for the forces of Syrian President Bashar Assad will probably be the heartland of rebel territory, the neighboring province of Idlib.

The province west of Aleppo is a stronghold of al-Qaida's Syria affiliate and is now also packed with tens of thousands of rebels, many of them evacuated from other parts of the country, making it likely to be an even more bloody theater than Aleppo.

Idlib has direct links to the Turkish border, and is located only a few kilometers north of Hama, a central province and key point for defending Assad's coastal strongholds and nearby Russian military bases.

Asked where he will turn to next, Assad has suggested his first priority, after fortifying the area around Aleppo city, would be Idlib.

"Identifying which city comes next depends on which city contains the largest number of terrorists and which city provides other countries with the opportunity to support them logistically," he told Russian media outlets in an interview in Damascus this week.

"Currently, there are direct links between Aleppo and Idlib because of the presence of Jabhat al-Nusra inside and on the outskirts of Aleppo and in Idlib," he said, a reference to the al-Qaida affiliate, formerly known as the Nusra Front, now the Fatah al-Sham Front. He added that the decision about what comes next will be made through discussions with his Russian and Iranian allies.

The government's loss of Jisr al-Shughour, in the westernmost corner of the province, and with it the whole of Idlib province, in the summer of 2015, was what prompted Russia to intervene to shore up Assad's forces, eventually turning the war's momentum back in his favor.

SYRIA'S KANDAHAR?

For the past two years, as Assad pursued a policy of siege and local truces to force surrenders, thousands of rebels and opposition supporters have been deported to Idlib—a forced exile that many see as a calculated attempt to gather the fighters in one location where they can later be eliminated.

The province has welcomed thousands of Islamic militants—with varying degrees of extremist ideology—who have converged along with their families from the central city of Homs and the suburbs of Damascus, after capitulating to government forces.

It has become a common sight: Men receiving a hero's welcome as they step off the green buses in Idlib with guns slung over their shoulders, having been forced to leave besieged and bombarded towns and cities.

"The government wants to prepare people, psychologically, for the idea that Idlib is the Kandahar of Syria," said Ibrahim Hamidi, a journalist who covers Syrian affairs for the Saudi-owned newspaper Al Hayat.

He was referring to Kandahar province in Afghanistan, the base of the militant Taliban's 1996-2001 government. He said the presence of so many Islamic militants would make it easier for the government and its allies to later justify a massive assault.

The province has the most powerful concentration of rebels. According to the Institute for the Study of War, it boasts more than 50,000 fighters regrouped under the umbrella organization Jaish al-Fatah, or Army of Conquest, which is led by the al-Qaida affiliate.

Using Idlib as a launching pad, the group briefly broke the government's siege of eastern Aleppo in August.

OPEN LINES TO TURKEY

Idlib is one of the few regions in Syria where the Islamic State group and the government have no presence, save for two small government-controlled Shiite-majority villages. The province borders Turkey, a key sponsor of Syrian rebels, and the coastal province of Latakia, a government stronghold.

Access to the Turkish border means virtually everything is available in Idlib—including weapons and other supplies.

Yezid Sayigh, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut, said a major point in the Idlib battle will be the role that Turkey will play, since the opposition survives on continuous replenishment of supplies from Turkey.

He added that if Turkey decides for various reasons—perhaps as part of an understanding with Russia—to reduce that assistance, then the Turkish border with Idlib would become like the Jordanian border with Daraa, where the armed opposition has very little ability to take independent action or to survive in the long run.

AL-QAIDA STRONGHOLD

Members of the opposition fear that government and Russian warplanes will eventually carpet bomb Idlib under the pretext that it is a stronghold of al-Qaida-linked extremists. The Fatah al-Sham Front's leadership is based there, perhaps making western powers more inclined to turn a blind eye to a massive military campaign targeting the province.

Since July 2015, U.S. aircraft have killed some of al-Qaida's most senior figures in strikes on Idlib, including Kuwait-born Mohsen al-Fadli, Sanafi al-Nasr of Saudi Arabia and Ahmed Salama Mabrouk of Egypt, who was killed in early October. They belonged to what U.S. officials call the Khorasan group, which Washington describes as an internal branch of al-Qaida that plans attacks against Western interests.

"The regime wants Idlib to become another Raqqa," said Hassan al-Dughaim, a Turkey-based Syrian preacher and researcher from Idlib, who lived there for most of his life until last year. The Syrian city of Raqqa is the de facto capital of the IS group's self-styled caliphate. Idlib city serves a similar function for al-Qaida.

Al-Dughaim said the Syrian government hopes that the presence of so many militants from different groups will lead to infighting. But despite the steady flow of fighters such confrontations have been rare.

Faysal Itani, a resident fellow at the Atlantic Council, agrees. "By lumping the displaced hostile populations in with the extremists, you've basically confined the problem to one place," he said. "Once that is done, the regime will go after it hard and no one will be able to make much of a fuss internationally."

Overdrive

AUTO REVIEW: 2017 Honda Accord hybrid makes 50 mpg come easy

By ROBERT DUFFER
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

TNS

At 48 mpg, the Honda Accord Hybrid in Touring trim is a premium-leaning sedan with peerless fuel economy.

Gas prices will go up and sedans will be the most popular car segment in America again. Unfortunately for the 2017 Honda Accord Hybrid, only one of those predictions is likely.

For prognosticators who foretell a return to $4 per gallon, or for those who'd rather not spew money like emissions, the Accord Hybrid has no plugs, no pretense, and is no Prius.

We averaged 51.7 mpg in one typical commute that featured highway cruising and stop-and-go traffic. We didn't drive any differently, only pushed a button here, moved the gear stick there.

Officially, conservatively, it gets 48 mpg combined (49 city, 47 highway), according to Honda.

Those Prius-like numbers come in a better-looking sedan than Toyota's utilitarian fuel sipper that screams "I care more than you!"

The normal-looking sedan could be a relief to some, boring to others. There's a special lightweight aluminum hood for the Hybrid, some new colors such as Crimson Pearl (maroon) in the tester, a bigger grille, LED lights front and back and 17-inch wheels with pinwheel caps.

The most significant update is the second-generation two-motor powertrain that, along with the 2-liter engine produces 212 horsepower, an 8 percent increase over the 2015 model.

What this means behind the wheel is not much. There is a "Sport" button to provide a quicker boost from a stop, and a bit more punch at passing speeds. Since there is a continuously variable transmission, there aren't traditional shift points if you're pressing for speed, just the sustained whine of a small engine at max capacity.

Under normal driving applications, the eCVT works fine. Electric motors quietly power the car until about 20 mph, when the engine kicks on and the car is powered by both motor and engine. The four-cylinder engine takes over at highway speed, when it is most efficient.

Shifting the gear lever from D (drive) to B (brake) will recapture more energy by acting as an engine brake while coasting. Let off the accelerator and the car shrugs into heavy coasting. You'll still need to press the brakes to come to a complete stop, but once you get used to it, there is very little braking needed.

If the driver chooses to be mindful, they can reduce most around-town emissions. We parked between three to five miles from our highway commute, and once off the highway we shifted the lever to B and pressed the EV button. We consistently reached our destination from the highway without using the engine.

Other times, when we drove like we didn't care, we got about 45 mpg for our total 30-mile commute. That's one of the understated charms of the Accord Hybrid: with both a Sport mode and EV only mode, there are driving options to suit the driver's mood.

In commuter applications, where highway miles and around town miles are split, hybrids are better than diesels. If the car is used as a roving business office with hundreds of highway miles logged per trip, then diesel is the more efficient option.

Diesels will have more trunk space, too.

The new Accord Hybrid battery pack is more compact, so trunk space increases 1.2 cubic feet to 13.5 cubic feet. Since the battery pack is behind and under the seat, the seats can't fold down. We were able to fit our weekend family needs in the trunk, including a hockey bag. Two normal-sized sets of golf clubs could fit.

The interior on the premium Touring trim is more like Acura than Honda, with cream-colored leatherette seats and wood accents in the dash.

Oddly, there are two screens in the center of the Accord. The 7-inch touch screen at the top of the center stack handles audio, phone and navigation. The 7.7-inch one above it, recessed in the dash, also displays audio, phone and vehicle info. Honda does not call this double vision.

That's not all! There's another display in the instrument panel for vehicle info. Using all three of these information portals is confusing, as expected, but after a week we had a pretty good handle on it. Voice commands helped, but you have to be in the appropriate submenu to get it to work. To make a phone call, for instance, you can't just say "Call Colonel Tribune" unless you are in the phone screen. He wouldn't answer anyway.

The upper screen felt like overkill until I used the backup camera and the excellent blind spot camera that projects backward from the passenger mirror when you hit the right-turn indicator.

Even so, it seems like there would be a way to integrate the vehicle functions and cameras into one screen.

When in motion, the redundant steering controls are much more effective than the narrow buttons and the terrible volume slider on the touch screen.

There's a lot going on in the cabin, due to all the advanced safety and convenience features, ranging from adaptive cruise control, which maintains the same distance to the car in front of you regardless of speed (over 25 mph), to lane departure mitigation, which gently torques the wheels and vibrates the steering wheel to keep you in a lane. These are the technologies that will in part enable self-driving cars. They can be deactivated, but then why get the fully loaded Touring unless there will be a range of drivers behind the wheel?

The interior of the Toyota Camry Hybrid is simpler, easier and about $5,000 less, but the Accord Hybrid is much nicer and gets a whopping 10 mpg better, which is also better than the similarly sized Prius V hatchback. The Accord Hybrid Touring costs only $1,125 more than the gas Accord and can't be beat for midsized sedan mpg.

NUTS & BOLTS

2017 Honda Accord Hybrid at a glance

- Vehicle type: hybrid midsize sedan
- Base price: $35,955
- As tested: $39,955
- (excluding $835 delivery)
- Mpg: 49 city, 47 highway
- Engine: 2-liter DOHC 4-cylinder and two motors
- Transmission: eCVT
- Parting shot: Fully loaded hybrid gets best mpg in class

MOTORING Q&A: Car wants to race when I want to stop

By PAUL BRAND
STAR TRIBUNE

Q: I bought a Mazda 6 with 25,000 miles on it from a leasing company. It has a smooth ride with excellent acceleration and gets over 30 miles per gallon in highway driving. The problem I am having is that occasionally when braking to a stop, the engine accelerates, and I have to hold tightly to the brake and press the start button to shut the engine off. On restarting, it is back to normal. I took it to my Mazda dealer and explained the problem to them, telling them it is a safety issue. They did something to the way the car determines the idle speed and that seemed to help. However, it still happens occasionally, though not as often.

A: My automotive database pulled up a Mazda service bulletin (01-005/14) dated March 2014 addressing a high idle speed condition. It calls for reprogramming the powertrain control module to the latest calibration, which is likely what the dealer did. But the bulletin also discusses the possibility that the driver is making contact with the throttle pedal when braking. In racing parlance, this is called "gas and brake" and can be very dangerous because it is somewhat self-propagating — the pressure on both brake and throttle causes the car to surge against the brakes, which often causes the driver to push harder on the brake pedal, which opens the throttle even more, causing increased engine power against the brakes.

Check carefully to see if this is in any way a possible explanation for what you are experiencing.

Q: I have a 2015 GMC Sierra Denali pickup with 28,000 miles on it. In the past couple of months, a vibration has developed that you can feel in the seat and steering wheel. The vibration is also noticeable to passengers and is similar to running over rumble strips. The vibration occurs at any speed between 35 and 75 miles per hour and lasts about a second or two and recurs every five to 10 seconds. I brought the vehicle to the dealership twice. The first time, they balanced the tires but nothing changed. Not satisfied, I brought it in a second time, and they test-drove the vehicle.

Here is their diagnosis: "Inspected vehicle. Road tested on new road. Small rumble felt from fuel management system. Working as per design."

This is not a small rumble and is very aggravating. What is failing in the vehicle and what can be done to rectify it?

A: It is possible that this vibration is caused by the active fuel management, or AFM, system, as it disables specific cylinders for increased fuel economy at cruise speeds. Specifically, GM says, "Some customers may comment on changes in the exhaust tone when an Active Fuel Management (AFM) equipped 6 cylinder or 8 cylinder engine changes to 3 cylinder or 4 cylinder mode. Some drivers may also notice a very slight vibration in either the accelerator pedal, floor pan and/or the steering wheel. This is a normal condition for AFM equipped vehicles and no repairs should be attempted."

You may be able to determine if this is the cause by placing the transmission in manual fifth gear, which will keep the engine in V-8 mode. If the vibration is gone under the same conditions, you've confirmed the cause. However, since this vibration has developed relatively recently, you might try swapping the wheels and tires from another truck to see if they are the source.

Q: My 2002 Ford Explorer V-6 runs fine until I turn it off and leave and it for 10 minutes. Then it won't restart—it starts and stalls. I come back an hour later and it will run fine until next time.

A: Start and stall is a sign of loss of fuel pressure. Vapor lock from high underhood and/or cooling system temperatures could be the cause. Try cooling the fuel rails by spraying them with water before the next hot restart attempt.

Life & Style

The dictionary folk at Merriam-Webster sum up 2016: surreal

NEW YORK (AP)—Was 2016 a dream or a nightmare?

Try something in between: "surreal," which is Merriam-Webster's word of the year, unveiled Monday.

Meaning "marked by the intense irrational reality of a dream," or "unbelievable, fantastic," the word joins Oxford's "post-truth" and Dictionary.com's "xenophobia" as the year's top choices.

"It just seems like one of those years," said Peter Sokolowski, Merriam-Webster's editor at large.

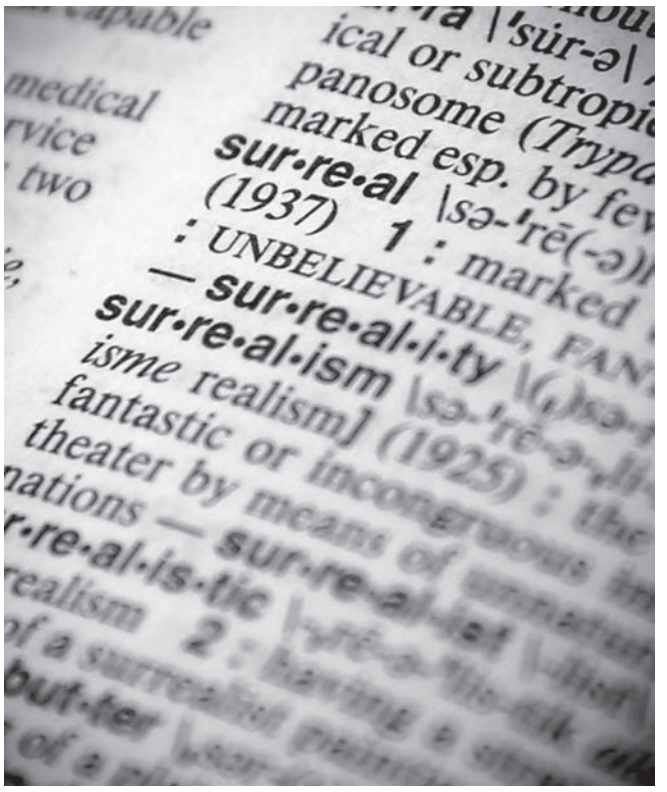
The company tracks year-over-year growth and spikes in lookups of words on its website to come up with the top choice. This time around, there were many periods of interest in "surreal" throughout the year, often in the aftermath of tragedy, Sokolowski said.

Major spikes came after the Brussels attack in March and again in July, after the Bastille Day massacre in Nice and the attempted coup in Turkey. All three received huge attention around the globe and had many in the media reaching for "surreal" to describe both the physical scenes and the "mental landscapes," Sokolowski said.

The single biggest spike in lookups came in November, he said, specifically Nov. 9, the day Donald Trump went from candidate to president-elect.

There were also smaller spikes, including after the death of Prince in April at age 57 and after the June shootings at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida.

Irony mixed with the surreal for yet another bump after the March death of Garry Shandling. His first sitcom, "It's Garry Shandling's Show," premiered on Showtime in 1986 and had him busting through the fourth wall, speaking directly to the audience and mimicking his real life as a standup comedian, but one who knew he was starring in a TV show.



AP

This Saturday Dec. 17, 2016 photo shows the "surreal" entry in a Merriam-Webster's dictionary in New York. "Surreal" is Merriam-Webster's word of 2016 based on spikes in lookups.

"It was surreal and it's connected to the actual original meaning of surreal, which is to say it comes from Surrealism, the artistic movement of the early 20th century," Sokolowski said.

Which is to say that "surreal" didn't exist as a word until around 1924, after a group of European poets, painters and filmmakers founded a movement they called Surrealism. They sought to access the truths of the unconscious mind by breaking down rational thought.

It wasn't until 1937 that "surreal" began to exist on its own, said Sokolowski, who is a lexicographer.

Merriam-Webster first started tracking lookup trends in 1996, when the dictionary landed online. In 2001, after the 9/11 terror attacks, the Springfield, Massachusetts-based company noticed plenty of spikes in word lookups. The most enduring spike was for "surreal," pointing to a broader meaning and greater usage, Sokolowski said.

"We noticed the same thing after the Newtown shootings, after the Boston Marathon bombings, after Robin Williams' suicide," he said. "Surreal has become this sort of word that people seek in moments of great shock and tragedy."

Word folk like Sokolowski can't pinpoint exactly why people look words up online, but they know it's not only to check spellings or definitions. Right after 9/11, words that included "rubble" and "triage" spiked, he said. A couple days after that, more political words took over in relation to the tragedy, including "jingoism" and "terrorism."

"But then we finally hit 'surreal,' so we had a concrete response, a political response and finally a philosophical response," Sokolowski said. "That's what connects all these tragic events."

Other words that made Merriam-Webster's Top 10 for 2016 due to significant spikes in lookups:

BIGLY: Yes, it's a word but a rare and sometimes archaic form of "big," dating to around 1400, Sokolowski said. It made its way into the collective mind thanks to Trump, who was fond of using "big league" as an adverb but making it sound like bigly.

DEPLORABLE: Thank you, Hillary Clinton and your basket full of, though it's not technically a noun.

IRREGARDLESS: It's considered a "nonstandard" word for regardless. It's best avoided, Sokolowski said. Irregardless was used during the calling of the last game of the World Series and its use was pilloried on social media, he said.

ICON: This spike came after Prince's April 21 death, along with surreal. "It was just a moment of public mourning, the likes of which really happen very seldom," Sokolowski said.

ASSUMPSIT: At the Democratic National Convention, Elizabeth Warren was introduced by one her former law students at Harvard, Rep. Joseph P. Kennedy III of Massachusetts. He described how on his first day she asked him for the definition of assumpsit and he didn't know.

"She said, 'Mr. Kennedy do you own a dictionary?' so everybody looked it up," Sokolowski laughed.

For the record: It's a legal term with Latin roots for a type of implied promise or contract. Kennedy didn't define it when he told the story.

FAUTE DE MIEUX: Literally, this French phrase means "lack of something better or more desirable." Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg used it in a brief concurring opinion in June to support a ruling that struck down a Texas law that would have closed all but nine abortion clinics in the state.

IN OMNIA PARATUS: A Latin phrase for "ready for all things." Curiosity surfaced when Netflix revived "Gilmore Girls" recently, including reference to this famous chant during an episode in the original series where Rory is talked into leaping off a high platform as part of the initiation for a secret society at Yale. It became a rallying cry for fans of the show.

REVENANT: Leonardo DiCaprio played one in a movie of the same name, sending people scurrying to the dictionary. It describes "one that returns after death or a long absence." It can be traced to the 1820s and while it sounds biblical, it is not, Sokolowski said.

FECKLESS: It's how Vice President-elect Mike Pence described President Obama's foreign policy when he debated Democrat Tim Kaine. It means weak or worthless.

Jet-setting Hungarian actress Zsa Zsa Gabor dies at age 99

AP

In a July 14, 1955 file photo, Zsa Zsa Gabor arrives at London Airport from Paris, in a Crimson dress and a straw hat.

Zsa Zsa Gabor, the jet-setting Hungarian actress and socialite who helped invent a new kind of fame out of multiple marriages, conspicuous wealth and jaded wisdom about the glamorous life, died Sunday at her home, her husband said. She was 99.

The middle and most famous of the sisters Gabor died of a heart attack at her Los Angeles home, Frederic von Anhalt said.

Gabor had been hospitalized repeatedly since she broke her right hip in July 2010 after a fall at her home. She already had to use a wheelchair after being partly paralyzed in a 2002 car accident and suffering a stroke in 2005. Most of her right leg was amputated in January 2011 because of gangrene and the left leg was also threatened. Her misfortunes were duly reported to the media by von Anhalt.

The great aunt of Paris Hilton and a spiritual matriarch to the Kardashians, Simpsons and other tabloid favorites, she was the original hall-of-mirrors celebrity, famous for being famous for being famous. Starting in the 1940s, Gabor rose from beauty queen to millionaire's wife to minor television personality to minor film actress to major public character. With no special talent, no hit TV series such as her sister Eva's "Green Acres," Zsa Zsa nevertheless was a long-running hit just being Zsa Zsa—her accent drenched in diamonds, her name synonymous with frivolity and camp as she winked and carried on about men, dahling, and the droll burdens of the idle rich.

She was like popcorn for the public and, for sociologists, the seeming fulfillment of the mindless future imagined in Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World," a creation made possible by mass, electronic media; her words and image transcribed and beamed into theaters and living rooms, on the Internet and the shelves of newsstands and supermarket checkout lines.

Her secret, in part, was being in on the joke, once saying about a 1956 TV role, "I play a fabulously rich woman who has just bought her fifth husband; she is very unhappy. I won't tell you who it's supposed to be." Ever game for a laugh, Gabor spoofed her image in a videotaped segment on David Letterman's "Late Show," which had the two stars driving from one fast-food restaurant to another, sipping sodas and digging into burgers like they were slabs of wedding cake.

Amid all the trivia, she had a peripheral part in two big scandals of the early 21st century: the death of Anna Nicole Smith (von Anhalt claimed to have had an affair with her) and the alleged financial scam of Bernard Madoff (a lawyer said she might have lost $10 million through him). And she was in the spotlight for a dustup from the late 20th century: "The slap heard 'round the world."

In June 1989, Gabor smacked Paul Kramer, a police officer, on a Beverly Hills street, after he pulled over her Rolls-Royce Corniche convertible for a traffic violation. She was convicted of misdemeanor battery on a police officer, driving without a driver's license and having an open container of alcohol in the car. She served three days in jail, performed community service at a woman's shelter and paid $13,000 in fines and restitution.

Rob Kardashian announces Blac Chyna split on Instagram

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Rob Kardashian says in an Instagram post that fiancee Blac Chyna has left him and taken their month-old daughter with her.

Kardashian

The 29-year-old reality star wrote on social media site late Saturday that Chyna took baby Dream and "left this beautiful home that I just bought for us."

In a subsequent post, he writes: "This wasn't fake or some publicity stunt. Trust me. My one month old beautiful baby girl got taken from me along with my wife who left me."

Kardashian and Chyna announced their engagement in April and pregnancy in May. E! tracked the couple's relationship and baby preparations in a reality show called "Rob & Chyna" that aired earlier this fall.

The network's "Rob & Chyna Baby Special" episode is set to air Sunday. No announcements have been made about a possible reconciliation special.

'Rogue One' soars to second-best December debut with $155M

LOS ANGELES (AP)—"Rogue One: A Star Wars Story" soared to the top of the weekend box office as expected, scoring the second-best December opening ever with $155 million in estimated ticket sales.

After the biggest Thursday night debut of the year, the intergalactic adventure blasted past industry expectations for a $130 million weekend, according Sunday's studio estimates. "Rogue One" opened at No. 1 in all markets globally, though it has yet to bow in China and Korea.

"We're in uncharted territory for December," said Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst for box office tracker comScore. "It's going to be really hard for any movie to catch up to this movie. ... This is only the second time a movie has opened this big in December."

The record-setter was "Star Wars: The Force Awakens," the space saga's seventh installment, which debuted to $247.9 million in the U.S. and Canada last December.

Like "The Force Awakens" did in 2015, "Rogue One" could top the box office for the rest of the year, Dergarabedian said.

Set before the events of the original 1977 "Star Wars," it stars Felicity Jones and Diego Luna as leaders of a rebel faction that steals plans for its imperial enemy's master weapon, the Death Star.

"Rogue One" knocked the No. 1 movie for the past three weeks, Disney's "Moana," to a distant second with $11.6 million, followed by "Office Christmas Party" with $8.4 million.

The weekend's other new wide release, the critically panned Will Smith drama "Collateral Beauty," opened in fourth place with $7 million.

"This is one of the most intense marketplaces for movies I've ever seen," Dergarabedian said. "You have a 'Star Wars' movie out there looming like the Death Star over everything, and a really great crop of Oscar contenders that keeps expanding."

Denzel Washington's "Fences" opened in limited release this weekend and expands on Christmas Day. "Manchester by the Sea," ''La La Land" and "Arrival," which all earned awards nominations recently, remain in the box office top 10.

Moviegoers who see "Rogue One" will also get a peek at next year's anticipated blockbusters: Trailers for the new "Guardians of the Galaxy," ''Spider-Man" and "Fast & Furious" films play before the feature.

"Rogue One" is the "perfect lead-in for 2017, which looks absolutely massive," Dergarabedian said.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to comScore. The latest international numbers for Friday through Sunday are also included. Final domestic figures will be released Monday.

AP

This image released by Lucasfilm Ltd. shows Riz Ahmed as Bodhi Rook in a scene from, "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story."

1. **"Rogue One: A Star Wars Story,"** $155 million ($290.5 million international).
2. **"Moana,"** $11.66 million ($27.16 million international).
3. **"Office Christmas Party,"** $8.4 million ($17.5 million international).
4. **"Collateral Beauty,"** $7 million ($11.6 million international).
5. **"Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them,"** $5 million ($19.5 million international).
6. **"Manchester by the Sea,"** $4.1 million ($4.66 million international).
7. **"La La Land,"** $4 million ($8.7 million international).
8. **"Arrival,"** $2.77 million ($5.97 million international).
9. **"Doctor Strange,"** $2 million ($2.8 million international).
10. **"Nocturnal Animals,"** $1.39 million ($1.99 million international).

SHOWBIZ TIDBITS

Singer Marc Anthony divorcing Venezuelan model wife

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic (AP) — Grammy-winning singer Marc Anthony and his wife announced Sunday that they are divorcing after a two-year marriage. A brief statement said the decision to end the marriage was made mutually by Anthony, a New York-born singer of Puerto Rican roots, and Shannon de Lima, a Venezuelan model. Anthony wed de Lima in 2014 at his residence in the Dominican Republic resort of Case de Campo. It was the third marriage for Anthony, who has six children from previous relationships. In 2011, he divorced from pop star and actress Jennifer Lopez. Anthony is also an actor, appearing in TV and films. He starred with Lopez in the 2007 film "El Cantante," about the life of salsa pioneer Hector Lavoe.

Martin Scorsese's nephew arrested on trespassing charges

NEW YORK (AP) — The nephew of Oscar-winning movie director Martin Scorsese has been arrested after New York City police say he tried to enter a Staten Island home by cutting through the screen door with a knife. Frank Scorsese, of Staten Island, was arraigned Saturday on charges including criminal trespass and criminal possession of a weapon. He was ordered held on $20,000 bail. It's unclear if he has an attorney who can comment on his behalf. A criminal complaint says the 41-year-old Scorsese was caught on video ripping the screen door off the West Brighton home Friday night and kicking the inner door. Police say he fled the scene when he was confronted by the homeowner. The New York Daily News reports that police couldn't say why he was allegedly at the home.

Pakistani cinemas to resume screening Indian movies

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistani cinema owners will resume the screening of Indian movies after a two-month self-imposed ban linked to the Kashmir conflict. Nadeem Mandliwala, a board member of the Pakistan Film Exhibitors Association, said Sunday that the group wanted to "lodge a protest" and felt that the message had been sent. He said the decision to boycott the films came in response to a similar move by the Indian film industry. Tensions have soared in recent months over Kashmir, a divided Himalayan territory claimed by both nuclear-armed rivals. But despite the decades-old rivalry, Pakistanis flock to Bollywood films, and several Pakistani musicians and artists help make them.

Former Boston police head says 'Patriots Day' gets it right

BOSTON (AP)—For Jessica Kensky, seeing the new Mark Wahlberg movie about the Boston Marathon bombing was deeply personal.

She and her husband, Patrick Downes, both lost their left legs below the knee in the 2013 bombing. Almost two years later, Kensky chose to have her right leg amputated because of excruciating pain caused by severe injuries she suffered in the bombing.

So when it came time to publicly express her feelings about the movie "Patriots Day," Kensky chose her words carefully.

She said she and her husband were initially reluctant to be involved in the film, but after seeing the movie during a special screening in Boston last week, she believes Wahlberg and director Peter Berg treated the victims and their stories with respect. But she said the question of whether the filmmakers "got it right" was one that's impossible for her and other survivors to answer.

"It can feel OK, they can feel respected, they can feel proud and happy it was done, but 'right' is so hard because what happened to us was just anything but right," she said.

"Patriots Day" is set to open Wednesday in theaters in Boston, New York and Los Angeles, and Jan. 13 nationwide. The movie's title refers to Patriots' Day, the day the Boston Marathon is run, a state holiday commemorating the battles of Lexington and Concord during the American Revolutionary War.

Some of the key characters in the movie who saw the film last week said they were anxious about it accurately capturing the devastation of the twin bombings near the finish line of the marathon. The explosions killed three people and injured more than 260, including nearly two dozen people who lost limbs.

Dad's affair brings misery to his family and to him

DEAR ABBY: My dad started an affair with a woman who is four years older than I am. He met her when he hired her for her "services." Fast-forward a year: He has left my mom. Mom left the state and has moved in with me. She's trying to rebuild her life, but she's still very much in love with my dad.

Dad, on the other hand, is miserable. His girlfriend is controlling to the point that he's not allowed to talk to his children or grandchildren. She's an alcoholic who mentally, verbally and physically abuses him. He recently left her and came to stay at my house. He told Mom and me that he wanted a fresh start.

Abby, he was here for less than 48 hours and went back to the girlfriend! I am convinced that he either has a drug problem or he's sick. He has lost an extreme amount of weight. I have no idea how to help him and I'm terrified that he is going to die.

Now he won't talk to me. He left while I was at work so he wouldn't have to face me. I don't understand why he would come here only to turn right around and leave. I am disgusted, disappointed and angry. Should I cut all ties with him until he gets his life together?

DISAPPOINTED DAUGHTER

DEAR DISAPPOINTED: Considering what has been going on, your feelings are natural. However, because you are unsure about what is driving your father—addiction, illness, indecision, etc.—do not "cut all ties." Leave the door ajar a little longer. There's a saying, "It ain't over 'til it's over." Victims sometimes need several attempts to leave their abusers, and your dad may be no exception.

DEAR ABBY: I have been dating a wonderful girl for about seven months. We're sophomores in college. She's sweet, kind, extraordinarily talented, and we treat each other wonderfully. Everything has been great, with the occasional disagreement.

The problem is that I'm starting to notice that she seems to be homophobic. I was raised in a liberal, open-minded home, whereas hers was much more conservative. She never met a homosexual until college. She has talked about feeling uncomfortable with two men kissing or talking about being intimate.

At first, I thought she'd be equally uncomfortable with straight couples doing the same thing, but she wasn't. When I tell her that I support marriage equality and the LGBTQ community, she gets very quiet and uneasy.

I care for her, but I don't know if I can be with someone who's this uncomfortable about homosexuality. What do you think I should do? This is a very important issue to me, and I would love your insight.

TORN COLLEGE SOPHOMORE

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

DEAR TORN: She may be a wonderful girl, but whether you are wonderful for each other is open to question. Try to project ahead. If the two of you were to marry and she was unable to overcome her aversion to gay people, to what extent would it limit your ability to interact with them? Or their ability to have a relationship with you?

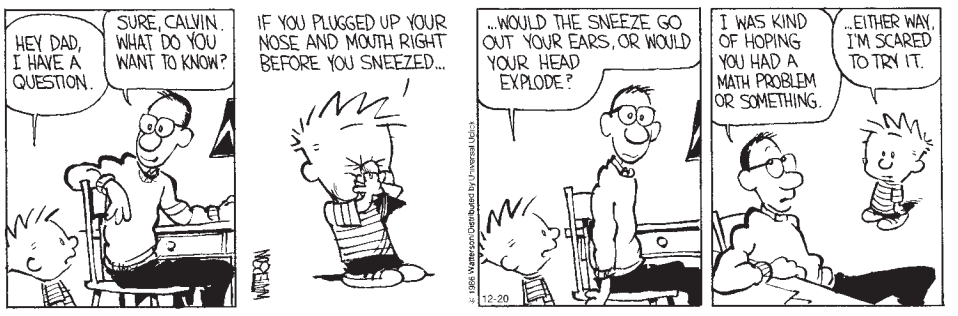
Let this play out a little longer to see if she's able to evolve with more exposure. If she's not, then she may not be the one for you.

What teens need to know about sex, drugs, AIDS and getting along with peers and parents is in "What Every Teen Should Know." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $7 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Teen Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

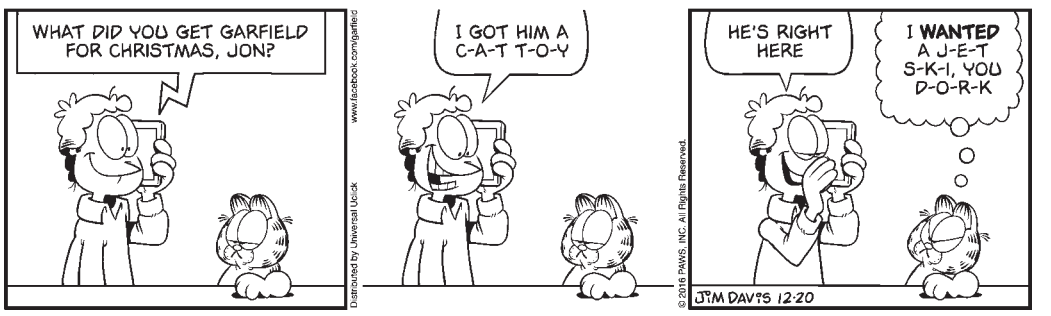
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


HEY DAD, I HAVE A QUESTION.
SURE, CALVIN. WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?
IF YOU PLUGGED UP YOUR NOSE AND MOUTH RIGHT BEFORE YOU SNEEZED...
...WOULD THE SNEEZE GO OUT YOUR EARS, OR WOULD YOUR HEAD EXPLODE?
I WAS KIND OF HOPING YOU HAD A MATH PROBLEM OR SOMETHING.
..EITHER WAY, I'M SCARED TO TRY IT.
© 1986 Watterson Distributed by Universal Uclick
12-20

Garfield®

By Jim Davis


WHAT DID YOU GET GARFIELD FOR CHRISTMAS, JON?
I GOT HIM A C-A-T T-O-Y
HE'S RIGHT HERE
I WANTED A J-E-T S-K-I, YOU D-O-R-K
www.facebook.com/garfield
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JIM DAVIS 12-20

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

DID DAD INVITE YOU TO HIS OFFICE PARTY?
HE DID!
YOU DON'T FIND THAT WEIRD? HE WORKS FROM HOME.
I THINK IT'S FUN. IT'S ONE OF THE THINGS I LOVE ABOUT YOUR DAD.
BOY... YOU REALLY DRANK THE KOOL-AID, DIDN'T YOU?
IT WAS A MOCHA LATTE, BUT YES I DID.
www.gocomics.com
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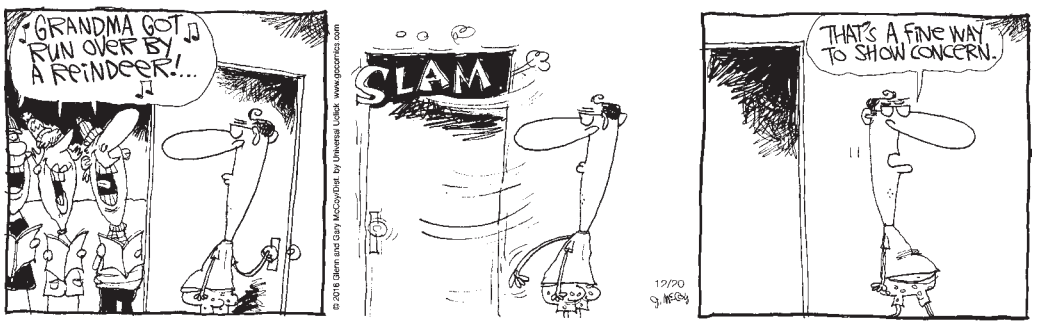
12-20

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


GRANDMA GOT RUN OVER BY A REINDEER!...
SLAM
THAT'S A FINE WAY TO SHOW CONCERN.
© 2016 Glenn and Gary McCoyDist. by Universal Uclick www.gocomics.com
12/20

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 First bed
5 Shriver of tennis
8 Verdi opera
12 Mystique
13 Mentalist Geller
14 Russian river
15 Golf reservations
17 Attire
18 CEO's deg.
19 Pepe Le Pew's family
21 Fulton's power
24 IRS employees
25 Frayed
26 Forest skyline
30 "Exodus" hero
31 Sand bar
32 "My word!"
33 Clock sound
35 Gullet
36 Jug handles
37 1899 fighters
38 Bat's home
41 Sneaky chuckle
42 Now, in a memo
43 Kitchen cloth
48 Boy, in Barcelona
49 Rowing need
50 Carry on
51 British gun
52 Fanatic
53 Fearsome dino

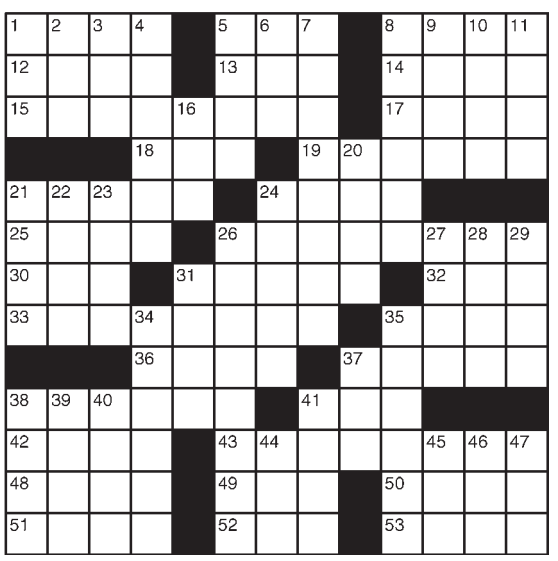
DOWN

1 Mouse chaser
2 Wish undone
3 Rage
4 Gotham hero
5 Cougar
6 Exist
7 Say the wrong thing
8 Majestic
9 Persia, today
10 Unlit
11 Priestly vestments
16 "Big Blue"
20 Film critic Pauline
21 Whack
22 Spelling or Amos
23 Guitarist Clapton
24 Gators' kin
26 Playwright Wilder
27 Monster
28 Bartlett, for one
29 Stitches
31 Luminary
34 Persevere
35 Companion
37 Wager
38 Axes
39 "Be that — may ..."
40 Barn roof topper
41 Male red deer
44 Vichy water
45 Series of battles
46 Leading lady?
47 Superman foe Luthor

Solution time: 22 mins.

J	A	G		A	S	T	R	O		M	U	D
I	M	A		L	E	N	I	N		I	N	E
M	I	S	T	L	E	T	O	E		S	T	P
			R	O	D		T	I	P	T	O	P
S	T	A	Y	U	P		S	L	A	Y		
H	A	L		T	O	Y		L	I	E	N	S
A	R	C	S		D	E	A		N	Y	E	T
H	O	H	O	S		S	R	S		E	V	A
		E	L	E	C		S	P	I	D	E	R
P	A	M	E	L	A		E	O	S			
A	L	I		E	C	O	N	O	M	I	S	T
C	T	S		C	A	N	A	L		F	R	O
K	I	T		T	O	O	L	S		S	I	N

Yesterday's answer 12-20



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Jonah Hill, 33; David Cook, 34; Nicole de Boer, 46; Joel Gretsch, 53.

Happy Birthday: Ease your way into new projects. Look at the big picture and divide what needs to be done into doable sections. Organization and preparation will be your keys to success. Don't let anyone goad you into doing things that don't fit your budget, schedule or plans. Problems will surface due to unexpected interference from someone who opposes your strategy. Your numbers are 4, 15, 23, 29, 30, 42, 47.

ARIES (*March 21-April 19*): Learn from past experiences and don't go overboard. Problems with institutions will arise if you have overspent or failed to pay off your debt. Look over your personal papers and make sure you are up-to-date before year-end. 3 stars

TAURUS (*April 20-May 20*): Express restraint when faced with money matters. A bonus you were expecting may not live up to your expectations. Don't overreact or make a fuss. Use your intelligence to help you make up the difference. Don't spend what you don't have. ✪✪✪✪

GEMINI (*May 21-June 20*): You'll progress slowly but surely if you work diligently to tidy up loose ends in preparation for new endeavors. An opportunity to make personal changes to your lifestyle or look will boost your morale. ✪✪

CANCER (*June 21-July 22*): Don't worry about what others do or think. You don't have to spend a bundle if you don't want to. Stay focused on what's important to you and use your intelligence to deal with any seasonal pressures. ✪✪✪✪

LEO (*July 23-Aug. 22*): A shopping spree will end in delays and poor decisions if you aren't careful. Don't let your emotions take over and result in overspending. A romantic gesture doesn't have to be expensive. Offer your assistance and affection. ✪✪✪

VIRGO (*Aug. 23-Sept. 22*): Emotional spending will get you in trouble. Offer less material gifts but more affection, attention and, most of all, time. Mix business with pleasure, but refrain from any sort of indulgence that may make you look bad. ✪✪✪

LIBRA (*Sept. 23-Oct. 22*): An emotional misunderstanding with someone you work with can cause tension. Do your best to share facts promptly. A surprise will be difficult to keep. Someone is likely to feel neglected, suspicious or left out if you are too secretive. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO (*Oct. 23-Nov. 21*): Helping others, making donations and reconnecting with people you haven't seen in a while will make this an eventful day. Old debts and favors can be collected. An emotional situation will bring back memories that require words of wisdom. ✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS (*Nov. 22-Dec. 21*): Learn from past mistakes and back away from anyone who tries to push you in a direction you don't want to go. Stay focused on what you can do without going into debt. Make reasonable deals that promise a high return. ✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (*Dec. 22-Jan. 19*): Emotional spending on unnecessary items will be your downfall. Look for alternative ways to cut corners and save money. Don't fall for sales pitches that promise the impossible. Offer genuine kindness instead of trying to buy love. ✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS (*Jan. 20-Feb. 18*): Don't lend, borrow or donate. Live within your means and refuse to let anyone guilt you into spending what you cannot afford to part with. If you feel the need to give something, offer your time or skills rather than cash. ✪✪✪

PISCES (*Feb. 19-March 20*): Look for bargains. Sticking to your budget will help ease the stress that accompanies debt. Say "no" to the things you don't need, and look for cheap ways to please those you want to surprise. Don't offer a false impression. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are steadfast, eager and ready for action. You are ambitious and tactful.

*Eugenia's website—**eugenialast.com**, Eugenia's android app @ **http://bit.ly/exhoro** and join Eugenia on **twitter/facebook/linkedin**.*

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

				2			4	9
		2			9			1
	6		3		4			
		1				9	7	
9								6
	3	5				2		
			6		7		2	
3			1			4		
1	4			8				

Difficulty Level ★★ 12/20

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

6	7	4	3	1	2	8	9	5
8	1	2	4	5	9	7	3	6
3	9	5	8	7	6	4	2	1
7	6	9	5	8	3	1	4	2
5	8	3	2	4	1	6	7	9
4	2	1	9	6	7	5	8	3
9	4	8	1	2	5	3	6	7
2	5	7	6	3	8	9	1	4
1	3	6	7	9	4	2	5	8

Difficulty Level ★ 12/19

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

BROMELIADS AND EPIPHYTES **Solution: 7 letters**

S	P	S	A	I	S	D	N	A	L	L	I	T	R	S
C	A	T	S	E	R	O	F	N	I	A	R	O	E	E
E	T	M	A	R	O	O	N	V	T	I	S	C	N	T
N	T	D	O	R	L	E	E	T	C	E	N	O	I	A
T	E	L	Z	I	E	R	A	H	T	E	H	N	A	R
E	R	O	A	R	W	C	R	T	C	U	S	O	T	T
D	N	G	G	O	H	O	E	S	M	W	U	M	N	S
E	E	C	R	M	M	R	E	I	R	T	N	P	O	B
S	D	T	E	E	U	R	D	E	R	O	L	O	C	U
E	S	N	O	T	O	I	A	O	H	A	I	F	R	S
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Judge Kim-Tenori
ota resident director for Finance Office and acting Rota Municipality treasurer Vivian Ogo Hocog was arrested and taken to Saipan on Friday for allegedly embezzling between $15,000 and ,000 from miscellaneous and muni counts from July 2015
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Elliott, Cowboys bounce back, top Bucs, 26-20

ARLINGTON, Texas (AP)— Ezekiel Elliott ran faster after he crossed the goal line than he did looking for a hole to get in the end zone from the 2-yard line.

Dallas' rookie sensation and NFL rushing leader had his eyes on an oversized Salvation Army red kettle in front of the stands. He jumped in, then disappeared when he crouched down.

Elliott rushed for a career-high 159 yards and that short score and the Cowboys closed in on home-field advantage throughout the NFC playoffs with a 26-20 victory over the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on Sunday night.

The Cowboys (12-2) bounced back after their franchise-record 11-game winning streak ended, hanging on after what looked to be a festive night following Elliott's antics turned tense when Jameis Winston rallied the Bucs from a 17-3 deficit to a 20-17 lead.

"One of the words we talked about right from the outset this week was 'response,'" Cowboys coach Jason Garrett said. "We did a good job early in the ballgame to get a lead and they started throwing the ball a lot early in the second half and they went ahead.

"And again, that word 'response' came back to the forefront."

Making his debut in the Sunday night spotlight, Winston threw for 247 yards and two touchdowns but had four turnovers, including an interception that led to Dan Bailey's 38-yard field goal that gave Dallas a 23-20 lead early in the fourth quarter.

Tampa Bay (8-6) had its five-game winning streak snapped and fell a game behind Atlanta in the NFC South.

"We've just got to keep winning, see how it plays out," Winston said. "I know I'm going to keep fighting. I'm not worried about not fighting. We just got to keep winning games."

Dallas stayed two games ahead of the New York Giants in the NFC East and needs a win without any help to clinch the home field for the postseason.

Elliott had NFL career rushing leader and former Dallas star Emmitt Smith and plenty of his teammates laughing when he jumped into the kettle—a staple in the end zones from Thanksgiving on every year with one of the Cowboys' most visible charities.

Garrett wasn't quite as amused, mostly because the move cost the Cowboys a 15-yard penalty on the kickoff.

"He was actually talking about that pregame, should he do it, will they fine him," said fellow rookie Dak Prescott, Elliott's quarterback. "I didn't know he was actually going to go down and come back up slow. Got a good laugh out of it, him coming up real slowly. It was funny."

AP

Dallas Cowboys quarterback Dak Prescott (4) breaks into the end zone for a touchdown as Clinton McDonald (98) and Bradley McDougald (30) watch in the first half of an NFL football game, Sunday, Dec. 18, 2016, in Arlington, Texas.

Prescott bounced back from his worst game as a pro, going 32 of 36 for 279 yards a week after completing less than 50 percent of his passes in a 10-7 loss to the New York Giants.

He also set a franchise record for rushing touchdowns by a quarterback on a wide-open 2-yarder up the middle on a draw. His sixth rushing score of the year topped Don Meredith's previous club record from 1966.

Elliott had 76 of his yards with Dallas trying to control the clock on its final two possessions, but Winston still had a chance in the final 2 minutes after second-half scoring tosses to Adam Humphries and Cameron Brate gave the Bucs a brief lead.

Tampa Bay's last chance ended on downs at its 20, and the Bucs' got just one first down on their final three possessions.

Titans 19, Chiefs 17

In Kansas City, Missouri, Ryan Succop kicked a 53-yard field goal into the wind as time expired Sunday to give the Tennessee Titans a victory on a frigid afternoon at Arrowhead Stadium.

Succop, who spent the first part of his career with Kansas City, came up short on his first try at the winner, but Chiefs coach Andy Reid had called a timeout just before the snap. Given a second chance, Succop knocked it through with a couple of feet to spare as the Titans poured off the bench to celebrate.

Tennessee rallied from a 17-7 hole, and Derrick Henry's second touchdown got the Titans (8-6) within 17-16 with just over three minutes left. But Titans coach Mike Mularkey went for the 2-point conversion and the lead. Marcus Mariota was pressured immediately and his pass never reached the end zone.

Raiders 19, Chargers 16

In San Diego, Sebastian Janikowski kicked a 44-yard field goal with 2:40 left, his fourth of the game, as the Raiders beat the Chargers in the Relocation Bowl to clinch a playoff berth for the first time since 2002.

Playing before what looked like a home crowd at 70,000-seat Qualcomm Stadium, the visiting Raiders (11-3) earned a playoff nod on the same field where they made their last postseason appearance, an embarrassing 48-21 loss to Tampa Bay in the Super Bowl on Jan. 26, 2003.

Texans 21, Jaguars 20

In Houston, Tom Savage threw for 260 yards after Brock Osweiler was benched in the second quarter, and Lamar Miller scored Houston's only touchdown with less than three minutes remaining.

The win was Houston's 10th straight in the division and left the Texans (8-6) tied with Tennessee for the AFC South lead. But Houston controls its playoff future with a 5-0 mark in the division.

Patriots 16, Broncos 3

In Denver, Tom Brady overcame a slow start to lead the Patriots to a rare win in Denver, dealing a crushing blow to the Broncos' playoff hopes.

Brady missed his first six passes for just the second time in his career; the first was way back on Oct. 12, 2003, against the Giants. But he came back to lead the Patriots (12-2) to a record eighth consecutive division title and a first-round bye.

Brady returned to the site of his worst beating, a 20-18 loss in the AFC championship 11 months ago when he was hit a career-high 23 times. This time, he brought a power run game and a much-improved O-line with him.

Packers 30, Bears 27

In Chicago, Aaron Rodgers hit Jordy Nelson with a 60-yard pass to set up Mason Crosby's 32-yard field goal as time expired in one of the coldest games ever played in Chicago.

Wide receiver-turned-running back Ty Montgomery ran for a career-high 162 yards and two touchdowns, and the Packers (8-6) earned their fourth straight victory despite blowing a 17-point lead in the fourth quarter.

They also moved ahead of Minnesota for second place in the NFC North and pulled within a game of division leader Detroit.

Bills 33, Browns 13

In Orchard Park, New York, the bumbling Browns are two losses short of becoming the NFL's second team to go 0-16 in one season.

LeSean McCoy had a season-best 153 yards rushing and scored twice, and the Bills kept their slim playoff hopes alive.

The Browns dropped to 0-14, matching the second-worst start to a season set by the 1976 Tampa Bay Buccaneers and 1980 New Orleans Saints. The 2008 Detroit Lions are the NFL's only team to go without a win in a 16-game season.

Steelers 24, Bengals 20

In Cincinnati, Chris Boswell tied the club record with six field goals, and Ben Roethlisberger threw a touchdown pass in the fourth quarter.

The Steelers (9-5) have won five straight and can clinch the AFC North title with a victory at home next Sunday against Baltimore (8-6). As a first step, they rallied from a 14-point deficit — kick by kick — and eliminated Cincinnati at a place where they're right at home.

They beat the Bengals (5-8-1) in the opening round of the playoffs 18-16 last January, getting the winning field goal with the help of penalties on Vontaze Burfict and Adam "Pacman" Jones. Burfict and Jones each got a personal foul on Sunday — Pittsburgh's Marcus Gilbert had one as well — as the animosity continued.

Ravens 27, Eagles 26

In Baltimore, the Ravens survived a desperate comeback bid by the Eagles, stopping a 2-point conversion with 4 seconds left.

On a wet and windy day, the Ravens maintained control of their playoff possibilities. If Baltimore defeats Pittsburgh on Christmas Day and Cincinnati in the regular-season finale, the Ravens will enter the postseason as AFC North champions.

Baltimore (8-6) led 27-17 with just over six minutes left when Joe Flacco threw an interception inside the Philadelphia 10 to give the Eagles (5-9) another chance.

Rookie Carson Wentz directed a drive that produced a field goal with 2:22 remaining.

The Eagles got the ball back at their 41 with 1:39 to go. A 24-yard completion to Zach Ertz and a pass interference call against rookie Tavon Young set up a 4-yard touchdown run by Wentz that got Philadelphia within a point.

Giants 17, Lions 6

In East Rutherford, New Jersey, Odell Beckham Jr. made another one-hand touchdown catch to delight replay fanatics, the defense turned in another stifling performance and the Giants inched closer to their first playoff berth since 2011.

NFC North-leading Detroit (9-5) had won five in a row.

The win was the eighth in nine games for the Giants (10-4) and it gave them their best record through 14 games since 2008, when they were 11-3.

The formula was the one the team has followed in Ben McAdoo's first season: just enough offense and a tough stingy, pass-rushing defense. That unit has come up with big back-to-back performances against two division leaders in Dallas (11-2) and Detroit, giving up 13 total points.

Falcons 41, 49ers 13

In Atlanta, Devonta Freeman ran for three touchdowns, Matt Ryan passed for two more and the Falcons clinched their first winning season since 2012.

Freeman rushed for 139 yards and capped his big day with a 34-yard touchdown run. Ryan completed 17 of 23 passes for 286 yards, including a pair of 9-yard scoring tosses to Taylor Gabriel and Austin Hooper.

Aldrick Robinson, stepping up with Atlanta star Julio Jones missing his second straight game with a toe injury, had a career-best 111 yards on four receptions.

The Falcons (9-5) made sure they didn't overlook the 49ers (1-13), moving a step closer to getting back to the playoffs after a three-season absence.

Saints 48, Cardinals 41

In Glendale, Arizona, Drew Brees snapped out of a two-game funk to throw for 389 yards and four touchdowns in the highest-scoring game in the NFL this season. Brees, who had no TDs and six interceptions his previous two games, completed 37 of 48 with no picks.

Brandin Cooks caught seven passes for a career-best 186 yards for the Saints (6-8), including touchdown plays of 65 and 45 yards.

David Johnson rushed for 53 yards and caught four passes for 55 yards for Arizona (5-8-1). The second-year back became the first player in NFL history to have at least 100 yards from scrimmage in the first 14 games of a season.

Vikings 34, Colts 6

In Minneapolis, Andrew Luck threw for 250 yards and two touchdowns, Robert Turbin rushed for two touchdowns, Mike Adams forced a fumble and added an interception for the Colts (7-7).

Frank Gore rushed for 101 yards and Indianapolis won on the road for the fourth time this season, dominating a Vikings defense that has been among the best in the league.

Adrian Peterson had just 22 yards on six carries and lost a fumble in his first game back from a knee injury for the Vikings (7-7).

Spurs celebrate Duncan, beat Pelicans in fundamental fashion

SAN ANTONIO (AP)—Before retiring Tim Duncan's No. 21, the San Antonio Spurs paid tribute to their longtime teammate by playing the game as he did for 19 seasons.

LaMarcus Aldridge had 22 points and the Spurs turned in a fundamentally strong performance in a 113-100 victory over the New Orleans Pelicans on Sunday.

"It was a game that we had to win, that we wanted to win badly," San Antonio veteran Manu Ginobili said prior to the ceremony that followed the game. "Even if we would have lost, this is way beyond it.

"Today's celebration is very, very important for his teammates, coaches and the whole franchise, the city. That guy is special. Even if we would have lost, it would have been an emotional night. I'm emotional now and it hasn't even started."

Duncan retired in the offseason after winning five championships and two MVPs in 19 seasons, all with San Antonio.

"For us, it's harder for us to stay focused for this game," Spurs guard Danny Green said. "Coming in, we knew it was going to be a lot of fun, but we wanted to be focused and respect New Orleans."

Duncan's style of play earned him the nickname "The Big Fundamental," and the Spurs honored him with their own rather seamless performance against the Pelicans.

San Antonio had six players score in double figures, got 31 assists on 42 baskets, committed just 13 turnovers and shot 49 percent from the field.

"Our physical effort was pretty good," Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said. "Our mental effort was better than it has been. A lot of people participated and got involved, so that was good."

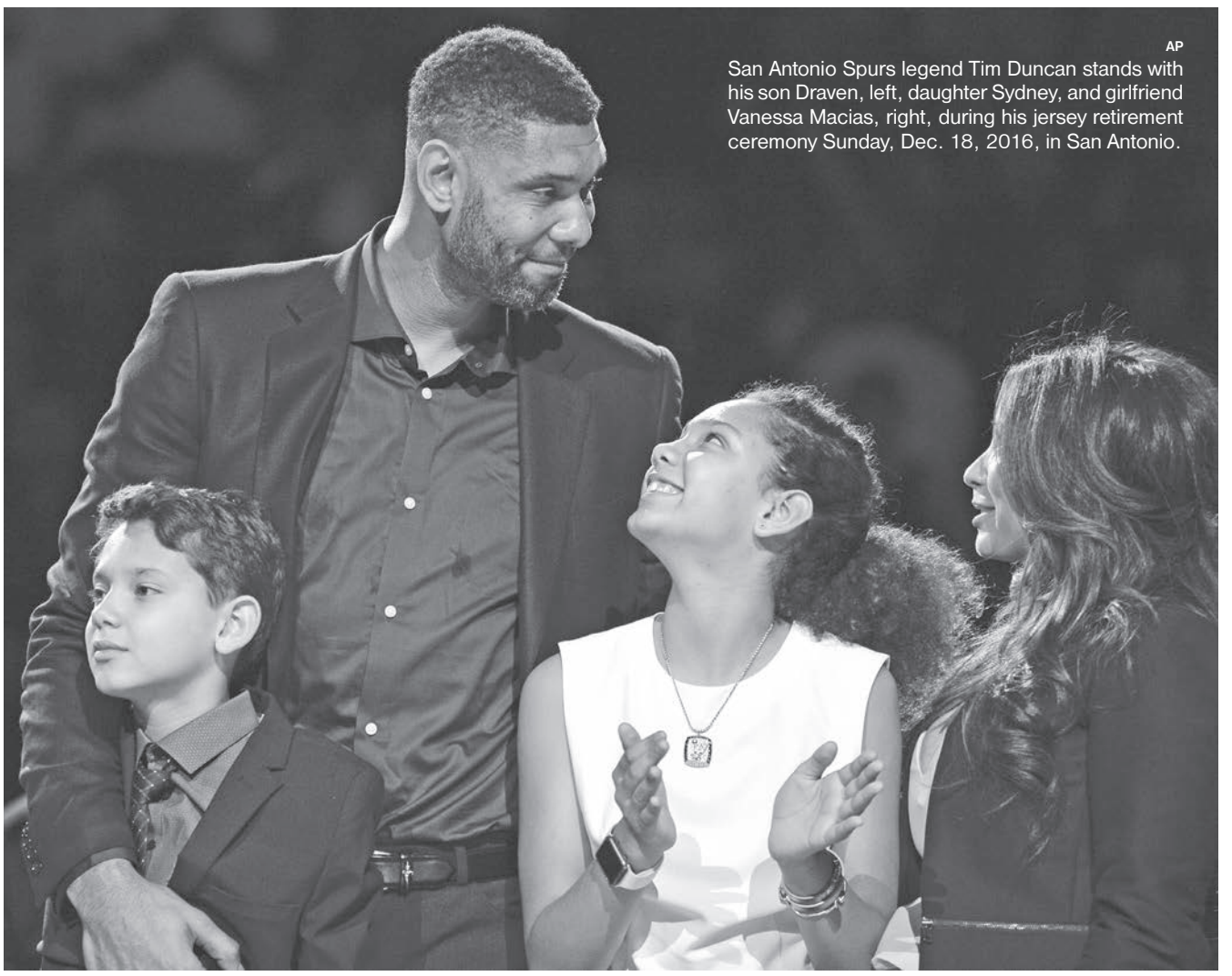
Ginobili and Tony Parker, who combined to form "The Big Three" with Duncan, combined for 29 points, seven assists and five rebounds.

San Antonio won its fourth straight overall and fourth consecutive at home after a slow start at the AT&T Center.

Aldridge got the Spurs' first points on a 20-foot jumper. San Antonio signed Aldridge to play alongside Duncan last season and eventually replace him at power forward.

"He was very aggressive tonight," Popovich said. "He wanted the ball. He demanded the ball, and he got the ball. He was very aggressive going to the hole. Taking shots that were open."

Aldridge shot 6 for 15 from the field in 26 minutes.



AP

San Antonio Spurs legend Tim Duncan stands with his son Draven, left, daughter Sydney, and girlfriend Vanessa Macias, right, during his jersey retirement ceremony Sunday, Dec. 18, 2016, in San Antonio.

Alexis Ajinca led New Orleans with 16 points. Anthony Davis was limited to 12 points on 5-of-12 shooting.

The Pelicans lost for the eighth time in 10 games.

"We're very inconsistent," Davis said. "One game we play well offensively, defensively we're talking, and another game we're not. We've got to figure out what team we want to be identified as. We can't keep going game from game with a different identity. We've got to come out the same way."

Wizards 117, Clippers 110

In Washington, Bradley Beal scored 41 points while Markieff Morris had 12 of his 23 points in the fourth quarter as the Washington Wizards beat the Los Angeles Clippers.

John Wall added 18 points and 11 assists for the Wizards. They closed with a 22-8 run to win their third straight game and fifth in six.

Blake Griffin scored 26 points for the Clippers, but was held scoreless during a fourth quarter in which coach Doc Rivers was ejected.

DeAndre Jordan added 13 points and 17 rebounds, and Chris Paul had 13 points and 12 assists. Los Angeles had won four in a row.

Washington shot 80 percent (12 of 15) from the floor in the fourth after already coming back from an 11-point deficit in the third.

Jazz 82, Grizzlies 73

In Memphis, Tennessee, Gordon Hayward scored 22 points and Rudy Gobert had 21 points, 12 rebounds and three blocks, helping Utah win a defensive battle.

The win —Utah's fourth straight and seventh in the last eight — came after the Jazz broke open a close game with about four minutes remaining. Boris Diaw, Hayward and Shelvin Mack connected on a trio of 3-pointers, turning a 66-all tie into a Jazz win. Diaw had 11 points and Mack had 10.

Mike Conley led Memphis with 14 points, while Zach Randolph had 12 points and 11 rebounds. JaMychal Green added 10 points and 11 rebounds.

Memphis managed only 30 percent shooting on the night against the aggressive Jazz defense. That included the Grizzlies converting only 2 of 23 shots from outside the arc.

Raptors 109, Magic 79

In Orlando, Florida, DeMar DeRozan scored 31 points and Jonas Valanciunas added 16 points and 13 rebounds, helping Toronto beat Orlando.

DeRozan has scored at least 30 points in four straight games and 15 times overall this season. Toronto exploded in the third quarter to open a 20-point lead and has scored 100 points in 14 consecutive games, the longest active streak in the NBA.

Toronto outscored the Magic 29-13 in the third quarter to break open a four-point halftime advantage.

Evan Fournier led the Magic with 15 points but was plagued by foul trouble trying to guard the more physical DeMarre Carroll.

76ers 108, Nets 107

In Philadelphia, Joel Embiid scored 17 of his career-high 33 points in the third quarter and hit a pair of free throws with 12.5 seconds left to lead Philadelphia over Brooklyn in a matchup of two of the league's worst teams.

Embiid added 10 rebounds and Ersan Ilyasova had 22 points for the 76ers, who snapped an eight-game home losing streak while winning for the third time in 13 games.

A leading Rookie of the Year candidate, Embiid was 12 for 17 from the field, including 2 for 3 from beyond the arc, and 7 for 8 from the free-throw line.

Brook Lopez had 22 points, nine rebounds and eight assists for the Nets, who lost their ninth in a row on the road.

Celtics 105, Heat 95

In Miami, Isaiah Thomas scored 23 points before getting ejected and Avery Bradley added 20 as Boston built a huge early lead on the way to beating Miami.

Al Horford had 17 points, eight rebounds and seven assists for the Celtics. They led by 22 in the first half and beat Miami for the fifth consecutive time.

Miami turned the ball over 23 times, and Boston converted those into 24 points. And the Heat, the worst free-throw shooting team in the NBA, went 6 for 14 from the line in the fourth quarter.

Goran Dragic led all scorers with 31 points for Miami. Hassan Whiteside finished with 23 points and 17 rebounds, all but one of those rebounds coming in the second half.

Thomas was ejected with 3:02 left for elbowing Justise Winslow in the face, bloodying the Heat forward and being assessed with a flagrant-2 after a lengthy review.

Mavericks 99, Kings 79

In Dallas, rookie Dorian Finney-Smith scored a season-high 17 points, leading six Dallas players in double figures.

After losing to Sacramento by 31 points at home 11 days ago, the Mavericks started fast. They made 11 of their first 15 shots and never trailed.

Deron Williams, Harrison Barnes and Wesley Matthews each scored 15 for Dallas.

DeMarcus Cousins scored 33 for Sacramento. The Kings were minus second-leading scorer Rudy Gay, who missed his third consecutive game because of a strained right hip flexor.

Rockets shooting the lights out under D'Antoni

By JON KRAWCZYNSKI
AP BASKETBALL WRITER

When Mike D'Antoni took over the Phoenix Suns in 2003 and started incorporating his plan to blow the doors off of the rest of the NBA, the coach remembers looking at the stat sheet almost sheepishly when he saw how many 3-pointers they were taking.

"We'd put up 25 and get scared, like 'Oh my gosh, maybe we're doing too much,'" D'Antoni recalled this week.

If he only knew then the revolution that he started.

In his first season in Houston, D'Antoni has found the perfect marriage between a coach's approach and an organizational philosophy. And the Rockets are soaring because of it. They set NBA records with 24 made 3s and a staggering 61 attempts in a win over New Orleans on Friday night, then put up the second-most 3s in league history with 51 in a comeback win over the Minnesota Timberwolves on Saturday night.

The Rockets have won 10 straight games to improve to 21-7, and D'Antoni isn't about to put any limits on how many 3s his team will hoist.

"That's the good thing about being in Houston. They kind of like that. Mathematics have said it's OK," D'Antoni said. "So we're just kind of pushing the envelope as far as we can go. And I don't know where that will end, but 61 is a good start."

There is no bigger envelope pusher in the league than Rockets GM Daryl Morey, who took heat for hiring D'Antoni with owner Leslie Alexander's blessing because many thought the Rockets needed a defensive mind after last season's train wreck on that end of the floor.

But the Rockets are a respectable 14th in defensive rating and make up for any shortcomings there by embracing modern analytics that put a premium on 3s, layups and free throws.

James Harden is an MVP candidate again, Eric Gordon is enjoying a rebirth in his first year in Houston and Ryan Anderson is letting it fly. The Rockets lead the NBA with 417 3s attempted—81 more than the splash family in Golden State—and are fourth in 3-point accuracy.

The efficacy of the approach was readily apparent in Minnesota on Saturday, when the Rockets hit five 3s in the final three minutes to erase a 12-point deficit and force overtime.

"I don't ever see us out of a game," Harden said. "We score the ball so easily, so well."

Record six MLB teams to pay luxury tax

NEW YORK (AP)—A record six teams are paying baseball's luxury tax this season, led by the Los Angeles Dodgers at $31.8 million and the New York Yankees at $27.4 million.

Boston ($4.5 million), Detroit ($4 million), San Francisco ($3.4 million) and the World Series champion Chicago Cubs ($2.96 million) also were sent bills Friday by the commissioner's office, according to information obtained by The Associated Press.

The Yankees are paying for the 14th straight year since the tax began, raising their total to $325 million. New York has said it hopes to get below the threshold by 2018.

Los Angeles owes for the fourth consecutive year and like New York pays at a 50 percent rate on the amount above the $189 million threshold. The Dodgers paid a record $43 million for 2015, and their four-year total is $113 million.

Boston and San Francisco pay at a 30 percent rate as offenders for the second straight year, and Detroit and the Cubs—a first-time payer—are at 17.5 percent.

The number of teams over the threshold topped last year's mark of four. This year's total tax was $74 million.

Major League Baseball negotiated the luxury tax in an effort to slow spending by large-market clubs and combined with revenue sharing has helped increase the competitive of small-market teams and those in the middle.

AP

In this April 13, 2016, file photo, Dodger Stadium is viewed prior to a baseball game between the Los Angeles Dodgers and the Arizona Diamondbacks in Los Angeles.

The threshold increases to $195 million next year under the new labor contract, and tax rates go up, too. There will be additional surtaxes, raising the rate to as much as 95 percent for the amount above $235 million, with the increase to be phased in for 2017 at the midpoint between the old and new rules.

Los Angeles lowered its payroll from a record $291 million last year to just under $255 million, which topped the major leagues for the third straight year. For purposes of the tax, which uses average annual values and includes benefits, the Dodgers' payroll was nearly $253 million.

Luxury tax payrolls figure to increase slightly across the major leagues next year because of a provision in the labor contract calling for the inclusion of salaries of players sent outright to the minors starting this Dec. 1.

The Yankees' regular payroll was second at $224.5 million, up slightly from last year's $223.6 million, followed by Boston ($200.6 million), Detroit ($199 million), the Cubs ($182 million), San Francisco ($181 million) and the Los Angeles Angels ($173 million).

Milwaukee had the lowest payroll at $65.5 million, down from $98 million last year. Tampa Bay was at $67 million, down from $77 million.

Spending on 40-man major league payrolls totaled nearly $4.1 billion, an increase of $200 million.

Tazawa finalizes $12M, 2-year contract with Marlins

MIAMI (AP)—Before signing reliever Junichi Tazawa, the Miami Marlins consulted with an expert on Japanese pitching: Ichiro Suzuki.

Tazawa finalized his $12 million, two-year contract with the Marlins on Friday after passing a physical. The deal came with an endorsement from Suzuki, the Marlins' outfielder and 3,000-hit club member.

What was Suzuki's scouting report on his fellow native of Japan?

"That he's a very good pitcher and can help us," president of baseball operations Michael Hill said. "He signed off, and that was good to know."

Tazawa had been with the Boston Red Sox since his rookie year in 2009, and has a career ERA of 3.58. Miami swung the deal for the right-hander after falling short in its pursuit of high-priced closers Aroldis Chapman and Kenley Jansen.

AP

In a Wednesday, May 25, 2016 file photo, Boston Red Sox relief pitcher Junichi Tazawa prepares to throw during the ninth inning of a baseball game in Boston.

"We know there's competition for players," Hill said. "You have a Plan A, but you have a Plan B, C and D to accomplish your goal."

A.J. Ramos remains the closer, at least for now, and Tazawa should help compensate for the loss of left-hander Mike Dunn to Colorado in free agency.

Hill said he's pleased with the way the bullpen shapes up.

"The goal is always to try to put together the deepest bullpen we can, and a bullpen with different looks and different ways to get people out," Hill said. "With Junichi you see someone who has pitched in the very competitive American League East and has a varied repertoire of weapons to get hitters out."

The Marlins have also acquired starting pitchers Edinson Volquez and Jeff Locke to help compensate for the loss of ace Jose Fernandez, who died in a boat crash in September. They added A.J. Ellis as their backup catcher.

"If we had to play right now, we're able to play," Hill said. "I'm very comfortable with what we've been able to accomplish in the offseason."

MBA

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finals showdown against the top-ranked Knights.

Mt. Carmel, with majority of the crowd cheering for the team, moved a set away from getting the championship it missed in the 2015-2016 season after drawing first blood in the finals. However, MBA battled back in the second set and pulled off a similar close win before completing the come-from-behind triumph with a 3-point victory in the deciding third set.

"After we lost the first set, I told our players that the game is not yet over. We can still come back as long as we give our best and play to our full potential. We did not expect the finals will be played that close," said Perez, adding that his players got their acts together to upset the Knights.

"Teamwork was the biggest factor that helped the team win in the finals," the MBA coach said.

The champion squad is made up of Stephen Joon Eo, Minsu Park, Paul Heo, Fritz Trinidad, Junsik Kim, Kevin Song, Gun Lee, Alex Hwang, Samuel Jin Park, Stephen Bartolo, Minseong Shin, Haesu Yeo, Hyun Jun Roh, Sungjun An, and Ensik Choi.

Eo was later named to the Boys All-League for his notable performance this season and was joined on the select group by Agape Christian School's Tychicus Xu, Grace Christian Academy's Matthew Mamaril, SIS' Colin Ramsey, and MCS' Seok Jun Yun.

The Girls All-League, on the other hand, had Agape's Claire Song, MBA's Katrina Reyes, SIS 2's Anna Qian, MCS 2's Rosalia Pangelinan, GCA's Cyril Salcedo, SIS 1's Julia Ishikawa, and MCS 1's Karleen Reyes as members.

TITLE

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Public School System Basketball Tournament last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Jun Alipio and Greg Sablan, who missed important shots in their sorry loss to Kagman in Game 1, 50-51, both scored in double figures in Game 2 to redeem themselves and power the Manta Rays to the title win. Alipio drilled a team-high 19 points, with majority of them made in the second period where Southern managed to take control of the match. Sablan chipped in 15, 12 of them came in the final half that the Manta Rays dominated.

While Southern had its key players stepping up in Game 2, Kagman missed its main man, Jeff Castro, who was not able to play in the deciding match due to cramps. Fatigue took its toll on Castro and a few more Ayuyus as they played their third straight game with only 10 to 15 minutes break after each match. Overall, Kagman had four matches last Saturday, while Southern played three, but had a long break before the back-to-back games in the finals.

With Castro out, Jeremy Agulto and Jose Quitano tried to provide the needed offense for Kagman and they were successful at the start, lifting the Ayuyus to a 14-10 lead at the end of the first quarter.

However, Southern grabbed the upper hand in the second canto, thanks to Alipio's 15 points. The lefty wingman got his offense going in the second frame, as he managed to stay out of foul trouble. In Game 1, he was saddled with two quick fouls in the first quarter, forcing him to spend a lot of time on the bench.

Alipio ended the second period with 5 straight points to power Southern to a 33-22 halftime edge. He also scored the first basket in the third frame, while Sablan knocked in 8 consecutive points in the penultimate quarter to keep the Manta Rays' double-digit lead, 49-38, going into the final 10 minutes of play.

Southern went on to protect its twin-digit advantage in the fourth quarter, as Kagman did not have enough firepower to overhaul the deficit with Castro riding the bench.

Aaron Ogumoro, who relieved the cramping Castro in the closing seconds of Game 1, had 20 points in a losing effort for Kagman.

SSHS 61— Alipio 19, Sablan 15, Siech 8, Kapileo 5, Paragados 4, Villanueva 4, Santos 3, Cobacha 3.

Kagman 49 — Ogumoro 20, Agulto 10, Blake 5, Quitano 4, Naputi 4, Reyes 4, Quitugua 2.

Scoring by quarters: 10-14, 33-22, 49-38, 61-49.

RUBBERIZED

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facility. Last weekend, despite the warning signs placed on the entrances of the oval, there were still a few people walking and playing at the track and the grass pitch.

"We are requesting for the public's full cooperation to avoid accidents and not to disrupt the repair works at the facility," Rogolifoi said.

Meanwhile, Rogoligoi disclosed that he is also following up on the paperwork for the renovation at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

"I will talk to Misamis Construction this week as I learned they are still waiting for more documents from procurement," the NMSA official said.

"Hopefully, the improvement will begin late January or early February," Rogolifoi added.

The Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Ballfield and the Miguel "Tan Ge" Basa Softball Field will also undergo renovations next year. The repair work at the two fields are timely as Saipan will be hosting the 2017 Asia Pacific Regional Championships. The facilities at the Oleai Sports Complex will also be used for the 2021 Pacific Mini Games, which will come to Saipan for the first time.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Toronto	19	8	.704	—
Boston	15	12	.556	4
New York	14	13	.519	5
Brooklyn	7	19	.269	11½
Philadelphia	7	20	.259	12

Southeast Division

Charlotte	15	13	.536	—
Atlanta	13	14	.481	1½
Washington	12	14	.462	2
Orlando	12	17	.414	3½
Miami	9	19	.321	6

Central Division

Cleveland	19	6	.760	—
Milwaukee	13	12	.520	6
Indiana	14	14	.500	6½
Chicago	13	13	.500	6½
Detroit	14	15	.483	7

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Southwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
San Antonio	22	5	.815	—
Houston	21	7	.750	1½
Memphis	18	11	.621	5
New Orleans	9	20	.310	14
Dallas	7	20	.259	15

Northwest Division

Utah	18	10	.643	—
Oklahoma City	16	11	.593	1½
Portland	13	16	.448	5½
Denver	11	16	.407	6½
Minnesota	7	19	.269	10

Pacific Division

Golden State	24	4	.857	—
L.A. Clippers	20	8	.714	4
Sacramento	10	17	.370	13½
L.A. Lakers	11	19	.367	14
Phoenix	8	19	.296	15½

NFL STANDINGS

AMERICAN CONFERENCE

East

	W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA
y-New England	12	2	0	.857	365	233
Miami	9	5	0	.643	315	314
Buffalo	7	7	0	.500	358	314
N.Y. Jets	4	10	0	.286	242	358

South

Houston	8	6	0	.571	250	294
Tennessee	8	6	0	.571	340	323
Indianapolis	7	7	0	.500	362	339
Jacksonville	2	12	0	.143	260	359

North

Pittsburgh	9	5	0	.643	341	276
Baltimore	8	6	0	.571	306	263
Cincinnati	5	8	1	.393	288	293
Cleveland	0	14	0	.000	220	408

West

x-Oakland	11	3	0	.786	377	336
Kansas City	10	4	0	.714	319	274
Denver	8	6	0	.571	299	258
San Diego	5	9	0	.357	366	366

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

East

x-Dallas	12	2	0	.857	366	258
N.Y. Giants	10	4	0	.714	272	250
Washington	7	5	1	.577	330	317
Philadelphia	5	9	0	.357	316	299

South

Atlanta	9	5	0	.643	469	358
Tampa Bay	8	6	0	.571	313	322
New Orleans	6	8	0	.429	406	392
Carolina	5	8	0	.385	311	337

North

Detroit	9	5	0	.643	301	285
Green Bay	8	6	0	.571	363	339
Minnesota	7	7	0	.500	264	259
Chicago	3	11	0	.214	248	320

West

y-Seattle	9	4	1	.679	298	235
Arizona	5	8	1	.393	340	325
Los Angeles	4	10	0	.286	197	328
San Francisco	1	13	0	.071	264	434

x-clinched playoff spot
y-clinched division

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NMIFA U11 Interscholastic Football League Boys Finals

PHOTOS By ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Whispering Palms School/Brilliant Star School's Dylan Mister uses his body to deflect the ball during their title game against Mt. Carmel School in the boys division of the 2016 NMIFA U11 Interscholastic Football League last Saturday at the Hopwood Junior High School Field.

Whispering Palms School/Brilliant Star School and Mt. Carmel School players are bunched up in the penalty area after a corner kick from the Knights.

Whispering Palms School/Brilliant Star School's Casey Chambers, left, battles Roco Bellavia for the ball.

A Whispering Palms School/Brilliant Star School player kicks the ball.

Mt. Carmel School coach John Diego Masga hugs one of his players after their victory via shootout against Whispering Palms School/Brilliant Star School.

Mt. Carmel School's Markus Toves dribbles ahead of Whispering Palms SchoolBrilliant Star School players.

Leo Naraja dribbles in front of two Whispering Palms School/Brilliant Star School players.

Ruben Guerrero, center, is up against two Whispering Palms School/Brilliant Star School defenders.

Elliott, Cowboys bounce back, top Bucs, 26-20

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

Spurs celebrate Duncan, beat Pelicans in fundamental fashion

PAGE 25

MBA stuns Mt. Carmel in finals

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
A Marianas Baptist Academy player uses his fingers to tap the ball, while a Mt. Carmel School player attempts to block it during the first set of their title game in the boys division of the 2016-2017 Coalition of Private Schools Sports Association Volleyball League last Thursday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Marianas Baptist Academy played the spoiler's role in the boys high school division finals of the 2016-2017 Coalition of Private Schools Sports Association Volleyball League after outlasting Mt. Carmel School last Thursday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

The MBA Tigers lost the opening set of the title duel, 23-25, but recovered in the last two sets, 25-22, 15-12, to steal the victory from the heavily favored Knights. MBA's victory foiled Mt. Carmel's double celebration after the latter's girls team earlier defeated Saipan International School in their finals rematch.

The Brendon Perez-coached MBA denied the Knights' bid for a sweep in the high school volleyball league despite having a 0-2 record against Mt. Carmel in the regular season.

"We lost both of our games against Mt. Carmel before the finals and we only finished third in the regular season with our 5-3 record," said Perez, whose Tigers dethroned Saipan International School last Wednesday following a 25-22, 25-18 win in their semis game to set up a

See MBA on Page 26

Rubberized surface of track oval removed

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Resurfacing work at the track and field facility of the Oleai Sports Complex took a major step as the rubberized surface of the oval was removed yesterday.

Employees of Tang's Corp. "peeled off" the eight-lane track oval using a payloader. The dirty and bubbled covered rubberized surface was piled up with the portion of the oval facing the grandstand completely stripped off.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
A Tang's Corp. employee uses a payloader removes the rubberized surface of the Oleai Sports Complex track oval yesterday.

"I am glad that the contractor is catching up with the resurfacing works. They are a bit behind since the notice to proceed came out mid last month," said Tony Rogolifoi, executive director of Northern Marianas Sports Association, which is the caretaker of the Oleai Sports Complex.

"It is my understanding that this month the contractor will focus on clearing the track and field facility while waiting for the materials to arrive. Hopefully, in the latter part of January, the contractor will start replacing the surface," Rogolifoi added.

With the rubberized surface gone, Rogolifoi, for the nth time, reminded the public not to go inside the track and field

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Southern takes boys HS cage title

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Saipan Southern High School had enough gas left on its tank to fuel up its offense in the deciding Game 2 en route to a convincing 61-49 victory over Kagman High School in the boys finals of the 2016

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ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Saipan Southern High School's Roberto Paragados, left, challenges the defense of two Kagman High School players during the third quarter of Game 1 of their title duel in the PSS caging last Saturday at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.